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ACCENT

DANIEL CURLEY:
The Great Day

ITALO SVEVO:
Traitorously

KENNETH BURKE: 'Imitation'

IRVIN STOCK: Andre Gide,
William Hale White and the Protestant Tradition

ARTHUR GREGOR
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WALLACE FOWLIE

JIM WALTERS
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ACCENT
A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
Voume XII, Number 4 Autumn, 1952

ITALO SVEVO:

Traitorously

Translated by Ben Johnson

Signor Maier started for Reveni's house still not completely decided whether to apply for comfort or help. The two men had been life-long good friends; starting from scratch and by working every day from morning till night, they had both succeeded in making a great deal of money. Dealing, however, with two entirely different products, there had never existed between them even the slightest competition; but despite their never having worked together, their friendship, which dated back to early youth, had remained firm and unchanged until now, their declining years. Unchanged but lifeless: their wives never saw each other, and they themselves met daily only for a quarter of an hour in the Bourse. Now, both of them had passed their sixtieth year.

After tossing unable to sleep all one night, Maier had decided to write his old friend for an appointment. And now, as he was on his way to do it, a vague proposition for securing help from this old friend entered his mind: a proposition, he began to hope, he could present in such a way that it would seem to entail no risk at all to

Reveni. In his eyes, naturally, assistance was due him. Years of luck and honest work had been swept away by a moment of thoughtlessness! This was not to be taken lying down. Seeking to branch out, the old merchant had let himself be talked into signing a contract which had placed him in the hands of others; and they, once having mulcted every last bit of credit from Maier's signature, had pulled up stake and quit Trieste, leaving behind nothing but a few pieces of worthless furniture. At first, Signor Maier had determined, as his integrity required, to face all obligations. But it had now come to seem unjust that he should have to assume responsibilities not his own. If Reveni, who was a notoriously decent man, would relieve him at least for the time being of part of his load, Maier's prospects for the future would be improved. Maier could not recall having ever turned down a similar request himself. He remembered (and very clearly) having signed that contract; what is more, he remembered that it had seemed — or so it seemed to him now — a test of confidence in human nature — but he failed to remember that the original reason for drawing up the contract had been his desire to make more money.

If Fate wished to favor him, it would certainly act through Reveni, who, without even being asked, would offer to help him. This he expected of Fate. And then, but not until then, could he lay his plan of reorganization before his old friend who, provided he was of a mind to take on such risks, would accept it. Maier himself felt that there weren't any risks. He was only asking for long-term credit, and he knew he deserved it. His old age notwithstanding, he was still an enterprising man, and against that one time in which he had let himself be swindled he could cite hundreds of instances in which fraud had been averted. And for precisely that reason, dealing with him, there were no risks.

Reveni's home was situated in the downtown district of the city. Maier climbed the staircase, and from the minute the butler opened the door he felt nothing but envy. At the moment, he too had arrases hanging in a large ornamented anteroom, and a small carpeted chamber besides, like the one in which Signor Reveni and his wife were waiting to offer him a cup of coffee. But not for long! His poor wife was already out looking for a much smaller, more modest flat. Here, however, everything had that solid, confident look of a home that had existed for a long time and would continue so for a long time to come. At his home, on the other hand, everything was about to fly out the window. Except for his wife's jewelry, they still had

everything, but from all appearances those pieces were about to take off too.

The two men were the same age, but Signor Reveni was much more heavily built and paler than Maier. And seated as he was in a large armchair opposite Maier, who was sitting in a chair of similar great size himself, but timidly, perched on the edge of it, he — this man who had accumulated and accumulated without ever letting himself be tricked into signing an instrument like the one that had ruined Maier — seemed awe-inspiring.

Signora Reveni poured the coffee. She was a woman who dressed with a certain lacelike elegance even at home, at the moment in a morning dress that would have looked stunning on a younger, more beautiful woman.

Maier began to sip his coffee, thinking *Is she going to leave us to ourselves?*

Immediately, it appeared as though the Signora felt called upon to let him know that she did not intend to leave them alone: she informed him that for a number of days her Giovanni had not been well and that he spent all afternoon at home attended to by her.

It struck Maier as strange that a man who seemed healthy and who had just gotten up from lunch not only had to remain at home but had to be continually watched over by his wife. From this, he felt, he had to deduce that Reveni and his wife had already decided not to help him. He recalled that, of the couple, the wife was notorious for being the more close-fisted and that Reveni himself had once related how she had been able to rid him of a poor relation who had been pestering him with a request for money. And now, no sooner than Reveni had received Maier's request for an appointment, here she was hurrying to help him.

He felt humiliated — downright offended. Maier could not imagine himself being classed along with a poor and insistent beggar. Quite the contrary — he had come with a business proposition that would be of benefit to Reveni if he consented to have a hand in it. Moved by a desire to pull himself together, to cleanse himself of every trace of inferiority, Maier settled back into his own armchair too, in direct imitation of Reveni's position. With a slight nod, he thanked the Signora as she passed him a cup of coffee. And the effort he made was such that he actually felt that feelings of inferiority had been purged from his system. He would propose nothing to Reveni. He would pretend instead that he had requested the appointment for an

entirely different reason. But what reason? It was difficult to find one because these two old friends had hardly ever met to talk about business before. So business was out, then. But in what other field might Reveni be able to give counsel? Then he remembered that a few weeks before a friend had vaguely asked whether he would accept a post as Town Councilman. Perhaps he could ask Reveni for advice.

But Reveni at once launched into the very subject that had brought Maier to him. "That Barabich!" he exclaimed. "To think that Barabich, scion of a fine old Triestine family, has lowered himself to such a thing! And where is he now? They say he's already had time to reach Corfu."

To Maier that did not sound at all like the prelude to the offer of help he was expecting from Fate. Something else entirely! — Reveni, in fact, talked as though he sympathized more with the swindler than with Maier, the man who had been swindled.

He fixed himself somewhat more comfortably in the armchair, taking care, with his trembling hands, to hold on to the cup of coffee. He forced himself to assume an attitude of resolute indifference. "You understand, of course, I *had* to denounce him. By now, it's all the same to me if he goes unpunished."

The Signora had poured her husband another cup and was passing it to him; with her eyes on the cup, she took a step or two in order to reach him and then promptly turned to Maier: "Think of the mother involved!" she said, pained. As in her clothes, in the sound of her voice, in her every movement, the Signora was bent on injecting great sweetness even into the meaning of her words. For that reason, now, in the affair that was becoming Maier's ruin, she thought first of all of the thief's mother. And to think that she, with all her airs of a *gran signora,* had been a cabaret singer in her youth, stripping in public so long as she had found it worth-while! Had she nurtured this ill will for him because in his day Maier had tried to prevent her marrying Reveni?

It was no longer possible to feign indifference. Flushed with anger, Maier exclaimed with a wry smile: "You will understand that I don't give a damn about that mother, inasmuch as her son is about to make another mother suffer terribly — namely, my wife."

"I see," the Signora murmured, still sweetly. "I see." And she sat down next to the table and filled her own cup at the steaming coffee-server.

Apparently she was just now beginning to see, but she did not see

the whole picture because then she would have stated that either she or her husband was prepared to help him or that they didn't want to hear any more about it.

Reveni broke in. His outlook seemed to be that the affair could be considered from only one point of view — that of his poor friend. A little uneasily, he stretched himself out in his armchair, looked up and grunted: "An ugly business, a very ugly business!" He sighed and, finally looking Maier in the face, added: "You've had a stroke of really bad luck."

In other words, this meant the matter was so serious that any intervention on his part to ease the situation was entirely out of the question. So, no help; and Maier could spare himself the humiliation of asking. He rose, put down the demitasse, which he had emptied without even tasting the coffee, and, sitting down once again, said with an offhand gesture: "To be sure, there's money involved — and quite a bit — but not all of it. It's regrettable that the holdings I'll be passing on to my son have been reduced; even so, when I die he'll receive from me more than I got when my own father died."

Reveni's aloof attitude, that of a man who did not wish to hear more than he felt like hearing, changed, and he exclaimed, evidently genuinely pleased: "Then what I suspected is correct! Your difficulties have not set you back as much as they're saying around town. My good friend, let me shake your hand! I'm happier to hear this than if I'd just made I don't know how much!"

Reveni was wide awake now. He had even gotten out of his chair to go shake Maier's hand. Maier found himself unable to show much gratitude for such a demonstration of joy, and he let his hand lie inert in that of his friend's so that the other returned to his seat. Maier thought *Though they share my joy, they have been completely incapable of sharing my pain.* His mind flashed back over his day's activities: his fortune had been completely wiped out by that speculation, quite completely — completely! — and he was still not sure that in some drawer of some unknown person there might not be even more promises he would be unable to meet. His son would not inherit a single *soldo* if, in the brief span of life yet remaining, Maier did not vigorously apply himself. Alone, he had been able to take stock and arrive at some exact conclusions. But now, in his friend's presence, his sight was no longer so clear. Would it not be wise to conceal his true position even from Reveni in order to regain the credit he needed to stay in business? Still not well thought out, this excellent tactical

plan imbued him with a little vitality. The Signora, as if to show her own joy at such good news, offered him another cup of coffee, which he accepted with a grateful smile — a smile, he noticed, that cost him considerable effort. As it was, in order to demonstrate his thankfulness, he gulped down all the coffee, though it was somewhat more than he normally took.

Now that it was clear that Maier's situation was not unduly serious, Reveni seemed to find himself capable of speaking his mind: "I confess, I would never have trusted Barabich myself. I heard about your partnership only after it had been all worked out. But everybody in Trieste was aware that Barabich's deals had all finished badly."

"Yes, but never this badly!" Maier protested. "Actually, his undertakings always had the appearance of having been well managed but handicapped by bad luck."

Reveni gestured doubtingly. "I don't trust a man who has been set afloat so often and always sinks. It's pretty clear he doesn't know how to swim. Barabich's career began ten years ago with that business everybody talked so much about then, the one that had to do with loads of Chinese rice. Remember all the money he threw into the sea that time! Then, all of a sudden, he was an industrial promoter. Now, it's true that some of the industries he conceived actually prospered, but they prospered without him too because there always came a time when they didn't want him around any more. Nothing bad was said about him either; in fact, just the opposite: they talked a great deal about his honesty, but even so nobody was able to explain how it was that he was not connected with the industries any more. And then how did he live? Until he snared you, he didn't do anything but talk and talk. He talked about colonizing Argentina, he talked about colonizing the Klondike — both being endeavors that could not have brought him much since he never went into them. And then he discovered another remote land — automobile manufacture. And it strikes me as incredible that a man of your experience wanted to follow him there."

For Maier it was terrible, the fact that Reveni was right. He recalled how he had been lured by visions of enormous and immediate profits. But now, in order to defend himself, he also recalled how much he liked Barabich, who was younger than he, and so sure of himself, and bubbling over with ideas that gave him the aspect of a technician. And he wanted to remember only that fondness: "I was

also led into it out of a desire to help Barabich. I felt sorry because so talented a man had been forced to remain such a mediocrity."

For a moment, seemingly hesitant to reply, Reveni said nothing. Then he gave Maier a searching look as if trying to determine if he was really serious. Presently he remembered something that led him to speak laughingly as he made an unsuccessful attempt to make Maier laugh too: "Remember old Almeni? It was because of him that we had our first and last business conference. Remember? After a good deal of insisting on his part, he managed to get us — you, me and two friends of ours — all together to decide whether to lend him enough money to open up a centrally located coffeehouse which he and his son were going to run. He had to make it luxurious and for that reason required considerable funds, because only by making it de luxe would he be certain of a return. Neither you nor I fully understood businesses of that nature, but another of our would-be associates explained it, seriously doubting whether such a venture would be successful in this town. And the upshot was our decision that the greater part of the deal would consist of considerable help in a way agreeable to Almeni, who was an old and honest familyman, and who, despite his many fine qualities, had not succeeded in being more than a mediocrity either. Then we two interrupted — you and I — and we agreed at once that in the course of events one had to have some business dealings and one had to do good things too, but that a good deed in the guise of business was definitely bad business, the more so since it could no longer be considered a good deed. We finished by all agreeing on a little help for the old fellow because he deserved it, but nothing more. I remember your logic perfectly, and I'm surprised that you've forgotten."

Maier was eager to put up an energetic defense of himself. It was entirely too much for Reveni not only to refuse to help him but to claim that he was justified in it. "There's a great difference, of course, between Almeni and Barabich: Almeni was simply an old fool whereas Barabich was a refined and crafty young man with the single defect being that he was a thief."

Maier had spoken so heatedly, rancor had so keenly flushed his face, that Signora Reveni felt herself obliged to intervene lest there be too sharp a disagreement. The day before, she had seen Signora Maier with her daughter. "What a little darling your daughter is, with those gazelle-eyes of hers!" The gazelle was a sweet animal, and Signora Reveni had the word in her vocabulary.

Maier was not to be soothed, even if she applied the name of a *delicious* animal to *him*. A thought struck him. Not only did he recall the Almeni episode, but he was also pretty certain that he had been the one who had done the reasoning which Reveni was putting forth as something original with him. What foresight he had had then! And he was reminded of his past intelligence only that he might better chalk up against himself the enormity of his error.

And moved by self-pity, actually with tears in his eyes, he said to Reveni: "Life is long, too long, and it is made up of so many days, each one of which offers time enough to make the error that may cancel out the wisdom and assiduousness of all the other days. Only one day . . . against all the others."

Reveni looked off — perhaps at his own long life to try to discover a day when he had committed the error that might have imperiled the work of all the other days. He agreed; but maybe only to calm his friend. He did not seem particularly concerned by either the dangers he had met or those he was likely to meet. "Yes," he said, "life is long, very long, and very dangerous."

Maier felt that Reveni was incapable of putting himself in his shoes and that there was no reason to be angry with Reveni because, as everyone knows, merely thinking of the cold which others suffer is very difficult when one is himself cozy and warm; but he noticed that while Reveni was speaking, his wife was looking at her husband with a smile of utter confidence in him, of abandon, one that seemed to be saying, "A curious supposition! No! — you don't know how to make mistakes!"

And because of that, his dislike for the woman mounted to the point that he felt he could no longer stand being in her presence. He got to his feet and forced himself into making a gesture of courtesy toward her. He extended his hand, stating that some very pressing business made it necessary for him to leave. He had decided to visit Reveni at his office the next day, and not to request help: solely to convince him that life was long and that he should not condemn a man for one day's rashness — one day out of many. Holding out his hand to the Signora, he turned his back to Reveni. Reveni suddenly let out a peculiar sound. In a voice pitched somewhat lower than usual, he softly mumbled some incomprehensible word. Maier tried to catch it, failing, however, because it is hard to retain a series of meaningless syllables. Curious, he turned around as the Signora, terrified, ran to her husband's side, crying: "What's the matter?"

Reveni lay asprawl in the armchair. But he was still able to say to his wife, after a moment, clearly, as though recovered: "I have a pain here." And he moved his hand which, incapable of making the desired gesture, simply rose from the arm of the chair. Then, for a while, nothing more; and he remained motionless, his head lolling upon his chest. He let out another sigh, like a lament, and no more. The Signora propped him up, screaming into his ear: "Giovanni! Giovanni! What is it?"

Maier dried the tears with which he had illustrated his own difficulties and turned to his friend. He had instantly surmised what was happening, but he was still so wrapped up in his own affairs that his first impulse was to think *He's going! Now, even if he wanted to help me, he couldn't.*

Manliness and the ability to rise above abject self-centeredness came only with difficulty. Maier stepped over to the woman and said gently: "Don't be frightened, Signora — it's only a fainting spell. But would you like for me to call the doctor?"

She was down on her knees in front of her husband. She turned to Maier a tear-splashed face which relaxed obviously in hope given to her by his words. "Yes! yes! Call the doctor!" And she gave him a telephone number.

Maier started to run off in the direction from which he had entered, but the Signora, still on her knees, called out: "No — the other way!" — an outcry softened by a sob. Then, opening the opposite door, Maier found himself in a dining room in which two maids were clearing the table. He ordered them into the next room to help the Signora and, quickly finding the telephone, dialed the number she had given him.

He did not make the connection at once, and trembling with impatience, he anxiously asked himself *Is he dying or is he already dead by now?* Then he felt the moments as he waited begin to fill with compassion. *So this is how death comes!* And then *He's no longer able to help me, but he can't refuse either!*

The doctor promised to come at once. Maier placed the receiver back and dallied a little before returning to Signora Reveni. He looked around. What luxury! His relations with Reveni had been very attenuated after Reveni's marriage, and their wives had never had anything to do with each other. He was seeing their dining room for the first time: light flooded in from the great windows and shone from the marble at the base of the walls, from the gilt in moldings of the

doors, from the crystalware that was still on the table. Everything was solidly placed because the poor devil in the next room had never taken any foolish steps. Nor would he ever take any now.

Which one of us is better off? Maier thought.

With the help of the maids, Signora Reveni had stretched the body of her husband out on the sofa. She was still busying herself over him. She had soaked his face with vinegar and was holding a little bottle of salts under his nose. He was now — there was no doubt about it — a corpse. His eyes had closed by themselves, but the left eyeball protruded into sight.

Feeling himself such a stranger to the woman, Maier did not dare say anything to her. He remembered the address of Reveni's daughter and considered going back to the telephone. Then he thought better of it and decided to go to see her in person. She lived not very far away.

"I think," he said hesitantly to Signora Reveni, "I think I'll go over to Signora Alice's to tell her that her father is not feeling well."

"Yes, yes!" sobbed the Signora.

He flew out of the door not so much to hurry, because nobody could help Reveni now, as to escape the presence of that corpse.

And once down in the street, he questioned himself again. *Which one of us is better off?* How peaceful he looked, stretched out on the sofa! Strange! — it was all over, his gloating over his own success enlarged by the errors of Maier. He had rejoined the great majority, whence, unmoving, he was staring now with that one protruding eye of his, joyless and bereft of pain. The world went on, but this adventure proved its utter pointlessness. And Reveni's predicament stripped all importance from his own.

IRVIN STOCK:

Andre Gide, William Hale White and the Protestant Tradition

> "Two thoughts will steady the Philippians, one thought is self, ii-12; the other is God, ii-13. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'"
>
> — From the *Dorothy Book* (unpublished) by Dorothy V. White (Mrs. William Hale White), May 2, 1909.

1

André Gide's enthusiasm for the literature produced in English is well known. For the most part his delighted discoveries were of figures whose greatness we have learned to take for granted, though he sometimes widened our understanding of them. There is one English novelist of genius, however, to whom he has practically had to reintroduce us. This is William Hale White, better known by his pseudonym of Mark Rutherford. White, who was born in 1831 and died in 1913, left nine books as profound, moving and beautiful as any written in 19th-century England. And yet they have been forgotten. "How does it happen?" cried Gide in his *Journal,* enraptured by *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford.* White's English-speaking admirers too must find it easier to ask the question than to answer it. Perhaps it is because of the "slightness" of the books — that is, their unusual simplicity, clarity and compression, together with the modesty of their tone and (ostensible) subject matter. Perhaps it is because of the unrelaxing intelligence by which his emotions, though intense, are always controlled and criticized. Perhaps, more than to anything else, it is due to the religious culture in which they are steeped. For we have, until lately, been dominated by a kind of village atheist tradition, which, forgetting that religion can be a mode of wisdom as well as an "opium of the people," tended to make the total rejection of our religious heritage one of the guarantees of intelligence. At any rate, such qualities were not likely to repel Gide — not only because Gide shared them all, but because, as he himself saw, there was at work, beneath White's quiet "Victorian" surface, an insight that was surprisingly Gidian.

Hence, remarks in Gide's *Journal* like the following:

> October 8, 1915: Wonderful integrity of the book [*The Autobiography*]. I do not know any work that is more specifically Protestant . . . The exquisite qualities of Hale White's style . . . are the very ones I should like to have.
>
> January 24, 1916: I read in Rutherford . . . a passage about the devil and hell that just happens to back up my thought wonderfully: 'The shallowest of mortals is able now to laugh at the notion of a personal devil. No doubt there is no such thing existent; but the horror at evil which could find no other expression than in the creation of a devil is no subject for laughter, and if it do not in some shape or other survive, the race itself will not survive.'
>
> March 8, 1936: I find in *Catherine Furze* the so specifically Protestant qualities and virtues which awakened such profound echoes in me when for the first time I read his *Autobiography* and *Deliverance*. Here honesty and integrity become poetic virtues . . . He develops to perfection qualities that I wish were mine . . . His art is made of the renunciation of all false riches.

And in the *Voyage au Congo* we find that Gide has given up the idea of translating White because his interest in him is "a little too special."

What constitutes the affinity so warmly acknowledged, and to what is it due? The answer to these questions may not only shed some light on the French author; it may, as well, bring us closer to a product of the Victorian age (often so very far from "Victorian") who has a great deal to say to a generation which has at last caught up with Gide.[1]

2

Since Hale White deals mostly with the world of his childhood, that of rural English Puritanism, the milieux in which these two writers find and embody their meanings could hardly be more different. Yet the meanings themselves are not only alike but are often almost identically expressed. One example of this we have found Gide seizing on in the passage he quotes above, and it is surely a clue to the devil "circulating" throughout *Les Faux-Monnayeurs,* already in 1916

[1] It is worth adding that Gide is not White's only admirer. Crane, Conrad, and Bennett praised his work. Howells found that it had "a sincerity so rare as to be almost precious in itself" and that he dealt "as originally with life as the Russians." Gosse called him a "genius," and H. W. Massingham "the one imagination of the highest order" produced by English Puritanism since Bunyan. Murry thought his style "very near perfection" and his work "secure against decay," and D. H. Lawrence wrote, "I *do* think he is jolly good — so thorough, so sound and so beautiful."

being considered. White's devil, who represents a psychological reality which the symbol helps us to beware of, is exactly the same as the one in the dialogue at the end of the *Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs,* who asks: "Why do you fear me? You know I don't exist." White pointed out the danger in laughing too hastily at the devil, and, sure enough, Gide's devil *wants* us to laugh at him. He knows, as White knew, that our disbelief may mean not simply a rejection of the symbol, but ignorance of the reality — which is thus set free to conquer.

Before we turn to a novel by White in which, as I shall show, all the central insights of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* are most amazingly foreshadowed, here are several more examples of the two writers' kinship. They come from various places in White's work, and for readers of Gide will hardly require comment.

> Each person's belief or proposed course of action is a part of himself, and if he be diverted from it and takes up with that which is not himself, the unity of his nature is impaired, and he loses himself.
>
> The symbolism of an act varies much, and what may be mere sport in one is sin in another.
>
> The universe is so complex that nothing is true save a word fitted to a particular occasion.
>
> There is no human truth which is altogether true.
>
> The curse of every truth is that a counterfeit of it always waits on it and is its greatest enemy.
>
> We are compounded of sincerity and insincerity in every thought; the laughter of the brightest, the prayer of the most devout, is tainted with insincerity, not because we have not the will, but because we have not the strength to be otherwise.

Remember the aged La Perouse in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs,* who suggests that no matter how hard we try to hear the voice of God, it is only the devil we can succeed in hearing — that is, only our selfishness, whatever the noble profession in which it comes disguised. But if White mistrusts the self, he also defends it:

> It is impossible totally to exclude the 'I' in our most unselfish acts. We ought not to torment ourselves because we cannot exclude it. We must not set pleasure so sharply over against unselfishness.
>
> The practice of self-denial is good; it may be learnt. More difficult than self-denial is enjoyment, rejoicing in that which ought to delight us. This perhaps may be partly learnt, but not without the severest self-discipline.

Was it not in just this "puritanical" manner, on reasoned and moral grounds, that Gide forced himself toward the delight an older morality had taught him to shun? "It has long seemed to me," he wrote in *Les Nourritures terrestres,* "that joy is rarer, more difficult, lovelier than sadness . . . [It is] not only a natural need, but also indeed a moral obligation."

Finally, again from Hale White:

> Perhaps life is too large for any code we can as yet frame, and the dissolution of all codes, the fluid, unstable condition of which we complain, may be a necessary antecedent of new and more lasting combinations. One thing is certain, that there is not a single code now in existence which is not false; that the graduation of the vices and virtues is wrong, and that in the future it will be altered. We must not hand ourselves over to a despotism with no Divine right, even if there be a risk of anarchy.

The novel mentioned above, the most Gidian of Hale White's novels, is a masterpiece called *Miriam's Schooling.* This little *bildungsroman* tells the life story of a country girl, too intense and too honest to be happy at home, who goes to London, has a miserable love affair, fails at nursing, and then comes back to an unromantic rustic husband, with whom we leave her learning slowly to be happy. To the hasty reader it may seem a slight "Victorian" tale, amusing, touching, "true," but a trifle. In fact, however, it dramatizes a most modern complexity of insight, and the theme at its heart is none other than that of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs.*

There is first of all one basic similarity which produces all the others and which exists not only in these novels, but in the entire work of both writers. It is that the poles between which their characters move are those of self-indulgence and self-sacrifice. Miriam is White's Bernard; like him she begins in a moral freedom that grows ambiguous in its possibilities, capable of leading to evil as well as to good; and like him she learns at last that mere self-aggrandizement is self-defeating, that a concern with self must, for inner health, happiness and progress, be replaced by a concern with that which is other. The problem of life is not, however, as simple as this sounds. For as Gide's novel gradually reveals, all our ideas, however they pretend to flow undistorted from "objective" reality, *must* contain that element of self which makes them different from what they pretend to describe. This self, in fact, is the devil, and because of it our ideas cannot help

being counterfeit: it is thus Gide's two basic symbols come together.[2] Hence the underlying theme of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs,* as Gide's novelist Edouard formulates it: "the rivalry between reality and our own representation of it." This is also, as I say, the underlying theme of *Miriam's Schooling.* And the insight of the "counterfeit" from which it rises — those endless counterfeits produced by the clever devil of our selfishness — not only appears in the English novel's dramatic structure, but is scattered throughout in explicit comment.

We have for example a cynic — like Strouvilhou, but not, of course, so finished a monster — to suggest the darkest side of this truth: that all "fine words" are merely lies. This is Montgomery, Miriam's faithless lover, who, himself corrupt, can believe in nothing noble, mocks his own incipient decent impulses and declares that all of life is based on cheating. " 'Illusion, delusion — delusion, illusion,' he hummed it as if it were the refrain of a ballad; 'it is nothing but that from the day we are born till the day we die.' " And his view is often confirmed by the aptness of characters to take self-justifying reasons for truth and self-gratifying words for things. "There is no person whom we can more easily deceive — no, not even the silliest gulls — than ourselves," Hale White remarks. "We are always perfectly willing to deny ourselves to any extent, or even to ruin ourselves, but unfortunately it does not seem right that we should do so. It is not selfishness, but a moral obligation which intervenes." To provide such "legitimizing" reasons for self-indulgence is exactly the devil's function in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs.* And now behold how in Hale White too the very symbol of the counterfeit coin issues from this. Miriam finds it pleasant to her self-esteem one day to replace the complex reality of her kind landlady with the word "conventional." "It was really not coin of the realm," we are told, "but gilded brass — a forgery; and the language is full of such forgeries, which we continually circulate, and worst of all, pass off upon ourselves."

That, as I say, is in both novels the truth's darker side. But there is another. From Gide we learn at last that if all our ideas are counterfeit, yet the gilt on our forgeries — like that on Bernard's false coin — is "worth more than two sous," may give them some value, value enough for human purposes. Social conventions, for instance, though counterfeit, may be good as well as bad: "What a fine convention it would be," cries Bernard, "that rested on the bona fides of every in-

[2] For my analysis of these symbols, and also of Gide's *Thesée* (to be mentioned further on), see, "A View of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*" in *Yale French Studies,* Number 7, 1951, and "André Gide — Apostle of Progress" in ACCENT, Summer, 1949.

dividual!" Our counterfeits can have the value *which they elicit from us.* In *Miriam's Schooling* White, using, like Gide, the same word "gilt" for good, as well as pejoratively, makes exactly the same affirmation. When Miriam and her brother come to London for the first time, their youthful hopes transform its ugly chaos.

> Dingy Clarkenwell and Aldersgate Street were gilded with a plentiful and radiant deposit of that precious metal of which youth has such an infinite store — actual metal, not the 'delusive ray' by any means, for it is the most real thing in existence, more real than the bullion forks and spoons which we buy later on, when we feel we can afford them, and far more real than the silver tea-service with which, still later, we are presented amidst cheers by our admiring friends in the Common Council, for our increasing efforts to uphold their interests.

What their minds make of London may be another "forgery," since the real London is different, but their feelings are real and set them to work with real energy. Such feelings, enlisted on behalf of a mere idea can go a long way toward making its realization possible; whereas that silver tea-service represents a life of lies in which even the liars don't believe. It is our real feelings, in short, which put the gilt of reality on our minds' forgeries. And this is so even though that gilt must rub off in time (as it will from Bernard's coin) and another set of forgeries require gilding by the feelings of another time.

Further parallels with Gide could be cited from this novel, but I will close the list with one: the book even contains a sample of an *"acte gratuite."* The concept of the motiveless act recurs in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs,* but of course Gide's most spectacular use of it is in *Les Caves de Vatican.* And it is perhaps significant that Gide's *acte gratuite* is a murder, whereas White's is a good deed. It is Miriam's attempt to save by perjury an old man accused of arson, an attempt which is pure impulse, for she has no connection with him and has not been asked. In rejecting the useless lie, the man's lawyers wonder why she did it, and one calls her act " 'perfectly motiveless . . a noteworthy instance,' for he was a bit of a philosopher, 'of an action performed without any motive whatever. I have always maintained the possibility of such actions.' " Not to open the question of whether a truly motiveless act is conceivable, her deed, like Lafcadio's, is a dramatization of the mind's freedom at least from ordinary notions of causation, its capacity for the new, the surprising, by which it can always break out of any theory which pretends to describe it with final accuracy — that is, in effect, to limit it. This native human free-

dom to do *otherwise* — perhaps worse, perhaps better — than is expected is the necessary foundation from which grow the characteristic problems and solutions of our two authors.

There is, finally, one statement from another source in which the resemblance is most vividly shown, and in which White's thought — the conflict which drives it forward, and the way this conflict is resolved — is most clearly expressed. It comes from an essay called "Principles," remarkable for its concentrated wisdom.

> What we have once *heard,* really heard in our best moments, by that let us abide. There are multitudes of moments in which intelligent conviction in the truth of principles disappears, and we are able to do nothing more than fall back on mere determinate resolution to go on; not to give up what we have once found to be true. This power of determinate resolution which acts independently of enthusiasm is a precious possession . . . One would like to have a record of all that passed through the soul of Ulysses when he was rowed past the Sirens. In what intellectually subtle forms did not the desire to stay clothe itself to that intellectually subtle soul? But he had bound himself beforehand, and he reached Ithaca and Penelope at last . . . After six months [at a long and difficult task] I began to flag, and my greatest hindrance was, not the confessed desire for rest, but all kinds of the most fascinating principles or pseudo-principles, which flattered what was best and not what was worst in me. I was narrowing my intellect, preventing the proper enjoyment of life, neglecting the sunshine, &c. &c. But I thought to myself "Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field," and his temptation specially was that "your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." I was enabled to persevere, oftentimes through no other motive than that aforesaid divine doggedness, and presently I was rewarded.

The reader may again remember Vincent in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs,* for whom the devil had to provide an ethic to "legitimize" his behavior, because Vincent "continues to be a moral being and the devil will only get the better of him by furnishing him with reasons for self-approval." But the passage bears an even more marked resemblance to the labyrinth chapter of Gide's *Thesée,* which, like the above essay, is one of its author's most complete and significant utterances. Gide's labyrinth is that of self-indulgence, in which each of us can lose himself if he risks it without a thread that will link him, as Theseus is linked to Ariadne, to the past, to duty, to his own resolves — to something, in short, held above his immediate desires. For the place is difficult to escape from because it is filled with vapors which "not only act on the will and put it to sleep; they induce a delicious

intoxication rich in flattering delusions . . . Each (victim) is led on by the complexities implicit in his own mind to lose himself . . . in a labyrinth of his own devising." Thus even our highest powers can be put in the service of the Sirens, proliferating marvelous reasons for a self-indulgence that will destroy us. It is interesting that White ends here too with the devil — the serpent — so dear to both writers as a symbol of the self, with its subtlety and its temptation of pride. But if each requires the self to be thus held in check, it is not by a chain fashioned by others, not by a principle heard from without. It is by a principle inwardly heard, and by a thread of which the *spool* remains in the hero's own hands.

3

The source of their affinity — and of much of their interest for us today — has perhaps already been made plain by the foregoing description. It is the Protestantism in which both were strictly nurtured. Though each cast off early the shackles of orthodoxy, each retained what was capable of a life outside the orthodox forms. In brief, they retained the two great ideas which Protestantism, though it often distorted or even contradicted them, made important in our culture. (These ideas are also human, needless to say, and others have found them elsewhere.)

The first idea is that of the primary importance of the moral problem. How should I live? is the question representing Bernard's emergence into manhood, which is thus shown to mean also into an awareness of moral responsibility. He wants at last not simply to be free and to enjoy himself, but to live right and to use his freedom for an upward progress. Bernard's question is at the bottom of most of what our two authors have written, and it is the tendency of each — for the moralist tends to become a generalizer — to formulate his answers into guiding principles. At the same time, however, beside this need to seek the right and be in it, each has kept with him from his Protestant heritage another element equally crucial. This is the idea of "the priesthood of all believers," the idea that no *other* priest, but only himself, only an "inner voice," can be the proper judge of the individual's moral rectitude. Of course, as our writers show us, these two ideas must often stand opposed. For the general principles which each is forever deducing from experience must forever be retested against fresh experience, lest some vital difference arise in self or situation, or lest what led one man upward lead the next man down.

The conflict between these two movements of the mind, the perpetual criticism passing back and forth between principles and changing particular contexts, has been for both Gide and White the motor, as it were, for an even deeper and more audacious exploration of the moral life. It has made that life eminently adventurous for them, made it one for which, if freedom of conscience is necessary, that same freedom creates endless dangers and difficulties. But it has also enabled them to avoid the two crippling extremes, so prevalent today. For on the one hand it sets them apart from those who live by principles they have placed once for all beyond question, and who would suffer reality to be deliberately distorted or simplified rather than have a principle be doubted. And on the other, it sets them apart from those who cynically reject principles altogether and give themselves up instead to the immediate cues of every new context or of personal appetite.

Now there are certain traditional modes of attack on both these attitudes. The preoccupation with moral questions, for instance, is supposed to be narrowing and, in literature, anti-esthetic. Thus, E. M. Forster speaks in his *Aspects of the Novel* of "that tiresome little receptacle, a conscience, which is so often a nuisance in serious writers and so contracts their effects — the conscience of Hawthorne or of Mark Rutherford." But this is rather like complaining that the requirements of literary form are a nuisance and contract a writer's effects. In fact, the moral conscience, like form, like many rules and regulations, is what makes effects possible, because it gives definition to the mere chaos of experience. If nothing were right or wrong, good or evil, if there were no *ought,* then all would be one and nothing would make any difference. It is the lack of a conscience that is the real literary handicap, because it means the lack of a mode of discrimination — and even of a motive for discrimination, that is, of interest in life. (Forster himself, I need hardly say, rejoices in a conscience of particular firmness and delicacy.) Of course, any complaint about too narrow or simple-minded a morality, which means too narrow or simple-minded a view of human experience, would be entirely legitimate. But it should be remembered — Gide is the great example, but Hale White is another — that for the subtle mind a conscience is precisely a path toward further subtlety.

Far more serious has been the attack on the other idea, that of the "priesthood" of each man for himself; we have witnessed indeed a steady decline in the prestige of the free conscience, and not only in the comparatively unintelligent realm of politics. In a famous and

influential essay, T. S. Eliot, for instance, seemed to see the Protestant "inner voice" as *only* in conflict with principles — which were *necessarily* derived from some outer authority — never itself, in its "best moments" the author of them. It is the voice, he told us, which "breathes the eternal message of vanity, fear and lust." Yet the self-exaltation of Protestantism was never at its best either pride of self or lust for self-gratification. The self was exalted, not as an object of worship, but as an instrument for use, the only reliable instrument in matters as complex and changing as those of the soul. The purpose for which it was used remained precisely a search for the altar on which it might not vainly be given up, the soil in which the grain of corn might "die" and bear fruit. It has always, in fact, been a development peculiarly characteristic of the Protestant tradition that to a God personally descried and freely chosen the self should be utterly abandoned.

The price for this assumption of personal responsibility has not been small. It accounts for the introspective gloom which marks so much of Protestant culture and the sounds of anguish it frequently emits. (The progress of Bunyan's Pilgrim would have been less agonizing, as well as less thrilling, if it had led at the outset to a center of authority where the burden of decision could be shifted to others.) It accounts too for the frequent eccentricities which rise to make a mock of human freedom. But the reward is at least commensurate with the danger run, for it is nothing less than the liberty to maintain a personal relationship with the Highest, with reality, justice and truth. Thus White, in his freedom, has sometimes pined for the certainty and security it has denied him, and Gide has perhaps been led by his into eccentricity. But in return, each has been enabled to stay honest, to explore freely the new paths his new experience has opened for him, and, most important for us today, to learn and show that freedom is not incompatible with morality, or with a *self*-discipline which can keep us moving "upward."

In spite of the profound affinity which has been my theme, however, a concluding word must be said of their differences, which are also great and interesting. They flow, on the whole, from this: that Hale White explores the moral life with his eye on human suffering, from which it is his main concern to seek deliverance; Gide, acquainted though he is with suffering, shakes it off as a weakness: it is his pride to concentrate rather on his goal of happiness, and to seek it happily. The result is that Gide seems to write for our strength, inspiring courage and leading to joy; White for our inevitable weak-

ness, mitigating terror and assuaging pain. Though their insight into the nature of moral problems is remarkably alike, Gide uses his to open the way before us, and White seeks instead to show us where we can legitimately rest, what amid the dangers of the way can support us when we fall. What he finds, like the discoveries of Gide and for the same reasons, can never be offered as absolutely sure. There are extremities, moreover, in which no tool or weapon of the mind has ever availed, and since he will not lie, he can only counsel us in these to remember that others have passed through them and to endure. But testimony exists to the admittedly peculiar fact that his books have done more than delight and liberate; they have consoled. Earlier in time and different in temperament, Hale White does not carry us so far nor in so many directions as Gide, who is the greater of the two, as he is surely one of the greatest forces for intellectual liberation among the writers of our period. But if in the presence of the French writer we are more dazzled and more widely instructed, in that of the English we are conscious of something more rare: that is, of love.

CONTRIBUTORS

KENNETH BURKE'S present article is an extract from his work-in-progress, *A Symbolic of Rhetoric* . . . DANIEL CURLEY, of Plattsburg, N. Y., has contributed stories to several American and European magazines . . . BOBB DAVIS lives in Oklahoma City . . . WALLACE FOWLIE'S book on Mallarmé is being published this fall . . . ARTHUR GREGOR has frequently appeared in the quarterly, as poet and playwright . . . BEN JOHNSON, who is living in Rome, is one of the most active translators of Italian fiction and verse . . . BERNICE SLOTE teaches English at the University of Nebraska and has contributed poems to the *Yale Review, Atlantic Monthly,* etc. . . . STEPHEN STEPANCHEV has appeared in *Poetry,* the *New Republic,* and Oscar Williams' anthology, *The War Poets* . . . IRVIN STOCK, on the English faculty at Rollins College, has published earlier studies of Gide in ACCENT and *Yale French Studies* . . . ITALO SVEVO (1861-1928), the Italian writer whose work Joyce did much to publicize, is best known in America for his novels, *As a Man Grows Older* and *The Confessions of Zeno* . . . JIM WALTERS lives in Miami Beach.

DANIEL CURLEY:

The Great Day

It was St. Patrick's Day of Mike Pegnam's first year in New York. Three hundred and sixty-four days out of the year he could take Irishness or leave it alone, but on that day he liked to stand up and be counted. On that day he was willing frankly to close up his shop and put a card on his door saying that he was sorry and would be back tomorrow. On that day people could look at his card and say, So that's the kind of name Pegnam is. I always thought it was French.

Unfortunately he didn't have a shop of his own to close up, so that year he had to concentrate on defrauding the company just a little more than usual. He had prepared very carefully for St. Patrick's Day over a long time. He had called on every architect, engineer, contractor, banker, real estate operator in his territory just to make sure that there was nothing that would break on March 17 and show that he wasn't on the job. As a result the company got almost a month of hard work out of him, and good will in his territory was the best it had been in over a year. The net result of his work, however, was that he discovered what he already knew: things were dead.

But on the morning of March 17 his conscience was good. Outside of a couple of items he noticed in the newspaper on the way to work, there was only one thing he had to check before the desks would be completely clear for the day and very likely for some days to come. He got to the office early and by nine o'clock he was on the telephone talking to Miss Rossi of Palazzo and Murphy, general contractors. She had promised him a report on the opening of bids for a convent and school in Rome-on-Hudson, New York. As a matter of fact she did much better than that. Not only did Palazzo and Murphy get the Rome job, but they were bidding as well on a monastery at Ithaca (the Buffalo office should have picked that up first) and on a convent-mission at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, a job which after lying dormant for years had evidently come to life just when the Atlanta office had forgotten all about it. That made three good reports, especially since two of them made the other offices look bad. Miss Rossi also gave him no-progress reports on two cathedrals, a burned rectory, a gym-

nasium, a church, an orphanage, a retreat house, and a pizzeria — this last job she passed on her way to work, and she was keeping her eye on it for him.

Actually, on the basis of his talk with Miss Rossi, he could have knocked off for the day. Things were so tough that there were many days when a reporter got far less than he had already got, but he wanted to make it look unusually good before he headed for McSorley's and St. Patrick's Day. He made a couple more calls and got a project-completed on an apartment house and an electrical sub-contractor on a restaurant renovation.

He had finished typing up all the reports and was just pulling himself together to go out into his territory when Jimmy Schyler, his immediate boss, came over with a newspaper. "Here's a present for you," Jimmy said. Mike took the paper and stared glumly at the circled item. "Don't get sore," Jimmy said. Jimmy wasn't a bad guy for a boss even if he did sniff whenever he came near Mike's desk after lunch and laugh selfconsciously and shake his head and say McSalty's.

"OK," Mike said. "What creep dug this up?" The paper was a local Long Island paper, and the item recorded the transfer of property in Great Neck to one Amandio Giavi, whose address unfortunately was just inside the lower boundary of Mike's territory and way over by the North River.

"Don't get sore at me," Jimmy said. "I know it stinks. But one of the big boys on the twenty-second floor came up with me on the elevator and gave it to me. 'See what your boys can do with this,' he says. 'I'll be watching the service,' he says. So we got to get out some kind of report. See what you can do anyway."

Mike said, "OK," and sat down with his hat and coat on. Jimmy stood beside him for a minute playing with his fingers and then evidently remembering something important rushed back into his office. Mike picked up his tattered Manhattan directory and found to his relief that Amandio Giavi had a telephone.

Mike let the phone ring half a dozen times, each ring increasing his assurance that he had done his best. Relieved, he pinned the clipping to a report form, added the telephone number, and scrawled CHECK SITE across the whole form. He stood up, dropped the thing into the out basket for the Long Island reporter, and ostentatiously took up his briefcase.

Jimmy was peering out of his cubbyhole as Mike went by. "Going out?" he said.

"Uh," Mike said. He kept going.

"Get anything on Giavi?"

"Nuh." He wasn't fast enough. Jimmy bounded out with a sheaf of papers in his hand and walked along to the elevators.

"Well, drop everything else and get down there. See Giavi if you can. Try to find somebody who knows what he's going to do. The heat's really on both of us."

"OK," Mike said. "If that's the way you want it, Jimmy."

Jimmy reached up and patted Mike's shoulder. "Good stuff," he said.

"I'll have to go back for a minute," Mike said.

"OK," Jimmy said. "On the ball." He went on to the elevators.

Mike went back and picked the clipping and all the other reports out of the basket and stuffed them into his briefcase. Of course this Giavi deal would have to come up just when he had everything so well organized. It would take time to get to that address, and at an address like that it would take time, very likely, to find Giavi, and then with a name like that it might take time to explain to him what was wanted. Mike's lunch at McSorley's would suffer and his St. Patrick's Day would suffer. He would suffer. And by God if he had to suffer the company would suffer too. That's what he had in mind when he took all the reports out of the basket. If he had to spend the whole day on Giavi, the company couldn't expect him to get anything else; therefore he could hold off on the Rossi material for a day and go to the show the next day. Those reports would cover him one day as well as another.

He must have been scowling worse than usual because when Jimmy met him at the elevators he said, "Just do your best. Don't worry."

"Don't worry," Mike said. The door closed between them and Mike went down to the street.

Mike was so mad that he even forgot to check the restaurant remodeling in the ground floor of the company's own building. The big bosses saw it every day as they came in, and they checked the service first thing every morning to make sure that the reporter (Mike) was getting the sub-contracts as they were awarded.

He crossed over to a Nedick's and savagely downed a double orange juice and then recklessly another. Even as he was doing it he realized that it wasn't a very effective gesture, but it was the best at hand. Then he plunged underground and stashed his hat, coat,

and briefcase in a locker. He boarded that wonderful BMT, the subway that runs diagonally where everything else is at right angles, and was shortly at Eighth Street on the East Side.

As he walked into McSorley's two ideas hit him almost at once. First he thought, Home at last. And then he thought, I forgot Giavi. For the slow moment that he stood just inside the door while his eyes became accustomed to the dimness, he remembered that he had forgotten to check Giavi's address. He had a nagging feeling that he wouldn't be able to forget Giavi again as he had angrily forgotten him while he was the very cause of his anger.

Even as he stepped toward the bar, Mike saw that McSorley's around him wasn't the place he had hoped it would be. It wasn't the place that it was all other days of the year. It wasn't the place that by being just what it was could be so much more in conjunction with a day like St. Patrick's Day. It was more crowded than it had any right to be, and most of the people he didn't know although by then he was a regular. He stepped up to the bar, however, walking gingerly on the green sawdust, which was the first thing that had come into his sight after his eyes had changed.

As he was waiting for the bartender to get to him, he saw that the walls were festooned with green crepe paper and that the tables, the good stained scarred tables, were covered with paper tablecloths, white with green harps and shamrocks. He noticed with some pleasure that the tablecloths were already beginning to disintegrate where wet mugs had been set on them. The bartender wasn't getting to him, and he was thinking that maybe it would be better later and that maybe Giavi could be fitted in about then. Then Harry, the proprietor, came through the crowd and stood beside him for a moment, putting a hand on his shoulder. "Good morning, Mike," Harry said.

"Good morning, Harry," Mike said.

"Where's your mug?" Harry said.

"I haven't been able to get one yet," Mike said.

"Otto," Harry shouted, "one for Mike." His red face streaming with sweat, Otto trotted the length of the bar with an ale and without saying a word trotted back to the tap, his white shirt dark across his back. Mike took a good swig of the ale. It at least was what it always was. "A great day, Mike," Harry said, and patting Mike's shoulder again he walked off through the crowd.

"A great day, Harry," Mike called after him. Harry only waved his hand without looking back. Mike drank off the rest of his ale, for he was very thirsty. He had no trouble getting the next ale, for Otto

was by then working that end of the bar. He left his money on the bar and Otto kept dipping into it.

When it got along toward twelve o'clock, Mike carried his mug over to the small table near the telephone booth, one of McSorley's few concessions to the twentieth century. His dripping mug made the green of the tablecloth run, and he got it on his hands. He wiped his hands on a plain paper napkin, all the while looking comfortably and leisurely across the room at the big picture of the nude, which hangs there for men to look at whenever they please without being afraid that some woman will catch them looking at a picture of a naked woman.

The telephone rang, and Mario the waiter, who happened to be passing, leaned into the booth and answered it. He looked across the room. "Gonzales," he shouted. "Gonzales." No one answered and Mario hung up the receiver without speaking into the phone again.

That reminded Mike of Giavi, and he gave the number another try, but no one answered. When he came out of the booth, a great plate of corned beef and cabbage and half a loaf of bread were ready on the table. But the meal was spoiled for him because he couldn't forget Giavi. Whether he looked at the woman in the picture or at his plate he couldn't forget him. He couldn't forget him even when he watched the older men at their ease at the table under the picture. That table was tacitly the head table, and Mike had been hoping for some time now to be invited to sit at it, but evidently he hadn't been around long enough although Harry addressed him by name and the cook allowed him to go out into the kitchen to order for himself, a privilege of the regulars.

When he had finished his lunch, Mike decided that the only way to forget Giavi was to get over to the address and finish it off one way or another. He was on his way out when he met Harry. "Not staying for the singing?" Harry said.

"I've got a little business," Mike said, "but I'll be right back. I've never been in New York before for the Day."

Harry nodded wisely. "It's a great day," he said.

"A great day," Mike said.

"Try to get back," Harry said. "Jimmy said he'd be sure to drop in for a couple of songs, and there'll be others too. Billy O'Neill, for instance."

"A fine voice for Irish songs," Mike said.

"When he doesn't pitch it too high," Harry said. Mike knew that as well as Harry did, but he knew it wasn't for him to say, so he just nodded and went on out.

Although Mike had had only six ales with his lunch, two more than his ordinary working-day allowance, he felt most pleasantly irresponsible now that he had made up his mind. The sunlight was something of a shock, but he carried enough of McSorley's dim quiet with him so that it didn't bother him too much. He even felt a little condescending toward the company as he walked across town to have a look at this Giavi.

It started out to be a pleasant walk, but after a while he had no more idea where he was going than a dog and no more awareness of what was around him than a tree. He woke up in the meat-packing section of 14th Street, and he knew he must be getting close to the address he wanted.

The door, when he finally found it after three passes up and down the block, was gray in a gray wall. The metal numbers had been painted over and were gray like the rest. There were no windows in the building on the street level, and those on the floors above were too dirty to see through. He opened the door fearfully.

A broad flight of stairs went up into the gloom. The stairs started right at the door, and by the time he was well inside he was several steps up so that he had some difficulty reaching down to pull the door shut after him. With the door shut he was in such complete darkness that he crept back down and opened the door again to get the lay of the land before going on up. Once out on the sidewalk he took a good look at the stairs. On each of the risers as far up as he could see a sign was painted, evidently indicating the tenants of the building. None of the signs he could see had to do with Giavi or his business. He saw signs for tailors and lawyers. There was even a sign for a general contracting firm he visited in Rockefeller Plaza. He got down on his hands and knees on the sidewalk and tried to read the sign on the first riser, but it had been so kicked and scuffed by people stumbling over the bottom step that it was illegible.

He went in and pulled the door in after him and went on up the stairs resolutely. He had already spent too much time on the Giavi deal. When at last he stumbled off the top of the stairs and stood looking around, he saw, both to left and right, a patch of dim light coming from a dirty window. There was a distant hum of machinery, and he could feel the floor tremble under his feet. He went to the left for no reason but that he thought the sound of the machinery came from that direction. He walked all the way to the window without finding a door that felt as if it had been opened in thirty years. When he reached the window he saw that instead of being at the

end of the corridor he was really at a bend and that in the distance another dim patch of light came through another dirty window.

Not wanting to get lost in the darkness, he reversed his steps and walked back toward the window at the right of the stairs. He found nothing in that direction either except another bend in the corridor. There it seemed to him that the sound of the machines was louder, but he could see no light coming through in the distance. As he stood hesitating, the sound of the machines swelled and sank quickly as if someone had opened and closed a door. One more try, he told himself, would rid him of Giavi.

He was very soon beyond the small light of the dirty window and in complete darkness. With his fingertips he followed the wall. Twice he sprang back as his fingers punched into nothing. Each time he told himself it was an open door. Once some great bug ran over his hand, and he stood still for a moment with his heart in suspension. He would have quit then, but he had to convince himself that he wouldn't quit for a bug.

He forced himself to step forward and very nearly broke his neck on a short flight of steps. As he tried to get up he put his hand on something that felt horribly like a man's face. He didn't dare move his hand, but whatever it was didn't move as he rested on it. Mike shifted his weight and stealthily moved his hand away and groped for a match. The light of the match showed only too clearly that it was a man he had touched. His mouth tasted as if he were eating a handful of pennies. He leaned down for a good look.

The man sat up suddenly, stared around quickly, blew a great stinking winy breath in Mike's face, and fell back again, hitting his head a tremendous thump on the floor. He began to snore loudly.

Mike picked himself up and got the hell out of there.

The next thing he knew he was sitting in a phone booth drinking beer with a little whiskey on the side. The receiver was hanging on its cord, and from time to time he would pick it up and listen to the ringing of the phone on the other end.

And then he had been walking a long time, and he felt a little sick with the last fire of the burned-out whiskey flickering hotly in his gut. And then he was in front of McSorley's.

As Mike first went into McSorley's he saw that the man with the fiddle was there. He wasn't playing at the moment but arguing loudly about Mother Machree. His one good eye fixed his opponent, and his fierce glass eye stared off at an angle, holding the rest of the room at bay. He was sitting in front of the telephone booth, so Mike

had to squeeze around behind him to get in. As Mike was dialing Giavi's number he could see that the kitchen was closed and that the head table was filled with people he had never seen before. The telephone rang half a dozen times. Then at the other end of the line the receiver was snatched up and someone shouted, "Giavi talking." Mike could hear machines in the background.

"Webster Building Reports," Mike said.

"What's that?" the man shouted. "This is Giavi talking."

"I'm calling for Webster Building Reports," Mike said a little louder and much more clearly.

"Turn the goddamn things off." This shout nearly tore his ear off. Mike held the receiver at arm's length, but when he listened again he could hear the machines running down as if they had been shut off. "Webster?" Giavi said — it was really a reduced shout. "What do you want, Webster? Want to sell me a dictionary?"

"No, Mr. Giavi. This is another Webster." People were always thinking he sold dictionaries.

"Well, what have you got, Webster? Cigars? Talk up."

"No," Mike said, "not that Webster either." Although not so many people would think of that, most people he came in contact with seemed to know it well enough to make a joke.

The man with the fiddle had his head in the telephone booth. "Quiet, quiet," he screamed. "We can't hear ourselves sing."

"Sorry," Mike whispered.

"What's that?" Giavi shouted. "What's that? Talk to me, Webster, What's your proposition?"

"Mr. Giavi," Mike said, "we publish a daily bulletin of interest to the building trades. Our subscribers want to know about building that is planned or is actually being done."

"OK. OK. So what?"

"I see by the paper," Mike said, "that you have bought property in Great Neck."

"So what?" His shout was becoming louder and more distracting. "OK. So what?"

"So if you could give us some information concerning your plans for the property —" Mike was beginning to sweat in the telephone booth.

"Why? Why? Why?"

"Our subscribers," Mike said, "who are contractors and material suppliers, will contact you and make competitive bids so that you can get the work done most cheaply and efficiently."

"No," Giavi shouted, "no, I don't know you. I don't want to buy any."

"But, Mr. Giavi, I'm not selling anything."

"Quiet," shrieked the head of the man with the fiddle. One eye stared fiercely at Mike. The other glared down the throat of the telephone as if to put Giavi out of countenance. Mike edged around with his back to him. He slammed the door on Mike's back.

"Mr. Giavi —"

"Non capisco inglese."

"Please, Mr. Giavi, listen to me."

"I don't want any."

"Mr. Giavi —"

"Start them up," Giavi shouted. The telephone trembled in Mike's hand. The machines cut in again in full cry.

"Mr. Giavi." Mike raised his voice. "Mr. Giavi, let me tell you again." He could hear only the machines. The door of the telephone booth beat against his back. "Can you hear me, Mr. Giavi?" Mike heard his voice softly under the sound of the machines. "I can't hear you, Mr. Giavi," he shouted. There was a click, then only the hum of a dead phone.

As Mike started out of the booth, the man with the fiddle blocked his way. "What's the idea?" the man said. "Huh?"

"What's the idea with you?" Mike said. "Yelling at me when I'm trying to do business over the telephone so loud I can't hear what he says."

"What's the idea yelling so loud we can't hear ourselves sing?" the man said, one eye fixing Mike and the other looking to the rest of the room for support.

"I have to do my business," Mike said.

"Business, business," the man shouted. And they glared at each other. Mike's heart wasn't really in it, but he didn't want the man to get away with anything. The man's face was getting redder by the minute. "Business," he shouted again and glared so hard that the eye that was looking at Mike jumped right out of its socket and rolled on the floor in the green sawdust.

They both got down on their hands and knees to look for it. There were ten or twelve of them on their hands and knees when Harry came over with a huge handful of mugs. "Drink up, boys," he said. "No hard feelings on Paddy's Day." He gave them each a mug and they sat on the floor drinking their ale and running the green sawdust through their fingers looking for the glass eye. The man with

the fiddle himself finally found it in a big drift of sawdust in the corner, and they all stood up and sang "Danny Boy."

Mike moved over to the bar for a while because he had a long way to go before he would feel good again. As he was settling down at the bar, an old man near the door began calling querulously for Harry. Several other old men stood up and seeing what was happening took up the call: Woman, Harry, woman. And Harry ran to tell the woman, No women, and the old men settled down again.

Mike was feeling pretty low what with Giavi and the man with the fiddle and the alcohol that was going away and leaving him flat. He tossed off a couple of quick ales, but it didn't seem to help much. About that time the man with the saxophone came out of the back room. Mike hadn't seen him go in, but there he was coming out with his saxophone under his arm and his saucer in his hand. Mike put a dime in the saucer and turned a fish eye on the man next to him, and whether it was because of that or not, the man put a quarter in the saucer. The man with the saxophone tilted change, saucer, and all into the pocket of his jacket. He tipped his hat to the room at large and went out into the street. Mike watched the face of the man next to him.

"But he didn't play a note," the man said.

"No," Mike said, "he never does."

In much better spirits he began tossing off ale after ale. He caught up on the sickness he had been feeling and left it far behind in a new cycle of exhilaration. He thought briefly of checking in at the office, but he knew that the office had been closed for hours. It must have been about then that the fiddle started "Kevin Barry" and he went over and made up a quartet with three clean-looking fellows he had been watching for some time as they sang song after song aggressively. He put his head in between two of the singers' heads, and they put their arms around his shoulders: another martyr for old Ireland, another murder for the crown.

They had sung for a long time and had drunk a number of ales with the fiddle player, who seemed not to remember any previous trouble. "Let's get the hell out of here," one of the singers said. "Too damn many foreigners. They don't have any business coming into McSorley's on a day like this."

"OK by me," Mike said. These seemed like good guys and he wanted to find out more about them, especially as they had an accent he couldn't quite place.

"Let's go then," one of them said.

"Will you wait while I make a phone call?" Mike said.

"Hurry," one of them said.

"We'll wait," another said.

Mike went into the booth and dialed a number. He was pretty drunk by then, and he didn't know what number he dialed or who he was supposed to be calling, but as he sat listening to the phone ring and ring and ring, he realized that he was calling Giavi. He could see himself dialing the number as clearly as if he were still doing it, so he hung up. Then for no reason he called information to find out if there was a phone listed for Giavi in Great Neck. And there was. At the address he had.

The phone was answered on the first ring. A very solemn-sounding man said, "Mr. Giavi's residence."

"J. T. Webster Corporation," Mike said. That's how the manual said to get past characters like him. It was supposed to sound just a little too impressive to brush off.

"Just a minute," the man said.

"Giavi talking."

"Webster Building Reports," Mike said.

"Can you hear me now, Webster?" Mike recognized the voice although Giavi was now speaking very quietly.

"Fine, Mr. Giavi. I can hear you fine." He must have shouted it because he saw the man with the fiddle glare at him over his shoulder.

"OK, Webster?"

"Yes, Mr. Giavi, I hear you fine."

"Drop dead," he said and hung up.

Mike put up the phone and opened the door of the booth. Two of his boys grabbed him by the arms, and they were out in the street before he could so much as say, I think I'd rather not. By the time they had got over to Third Avenue, he had at least found out who his friends were. Two were in the British Merchant Marine. One of those was Cuddles, from Liverpool. The other was Danny, from Cobh. That was a real discovery to discover a real Irishman on St. Patrick's Day. The third guy was named Bud, and he only talked like that because he happened to be with a couple of foreigners. At that Mike couldn't blame him because he found himself putting on a thick brogue.

Cuddles and Danny went running up and down the street yelling for the driver of a parked cab. Mike and this guy Bud leaned up against the Cooper Union and watched the other two casting back and forth like hounds on a scent. All of a sudden Bud said, "I'm on to you, so blow."

"What's this?" Mike said, coming back from a long way off.

"I'm on to your game. But I got there first, so blow."

"Speak up or shut up," Mike said. He thought it might be a good idea to sound tough.

"I found these two," Bud said. "I been working on them half the day, and when they pass out I'm going to be the one who rolls them, not some guy who just happens along like you, so blow."

"We'll see about that," Mike said. He twitched his shoulders inside his coat to give Bud something to think about. He knew he looked pretty big in his clothes even if he wouldn't know what to do in a fight.

Bud must have been convinced of something because he said, "Maybe I'll need some help. Even split. How about it?"

"We'll see," Mike said. He wanted to play it safe. He didn't think he could count on Cuddles and Danny if he tried to tip them off. They were both crazy drunk, and would probably think he was lying and gang up on him with their old friend Bud.

Bud and Mike stood there ready to fight if necessary but very reluctant to get down to it. Just then Danny and Cuddles came back with a taxi driver and they all piled into the cab. "Drive uptown," Bud said. They drove up Third Avenue and crossed 42nd Street. That much Mike could tell. Somewhere in the upper Forties Bud told the driver to stop. Cuddles paid the driver off.

As Mike got out of the cab, Bud bumped into him and roughed him up. "This guy's up to something," Bud said, looking to the others for support.

Mike knotted himself together, twitched his shoulder without much hope, snorted through his nose like a fighter, and waited for something to happen. He and Bud faced each other warily, waiting for Danny and Cuddles to make a move. "All right, all right," Cuddles said. "The beer's inside." It was all over.

They went into the bar arm in arm. The bartender didn't want anything to do with them they were so drunk, but he gave them beer to prevent a fight.

It was only a couple of beers before Danny got sick. As Mike got up to take him out for air, Bud winked at him. Mike nodded secretly.

This, of course was just what Mike had been waiting for, but by the time he got Danny outside he was no good for anything but to hang over a little rail around a freight elevator. All the while Danny was being sick, Mike was repeating, "This guy Bud is out to roll you. He's after your money. He wanted me to help him."

And all the while Danny kept on shaking his head and vomiting and not understanding at all. Then he straightened up and said, "Oh, he is, is he?"

Mike had just got his work in in time because the others were coming out of the bar. "Here they come now," Mike said. "Tell Cuddles and let's make an end to this." Danny nodded with his face all closed together.

"How do you feel, Danny?" Cuddles said.

"Better," Danny said.

"I want to talk to you for a minute," Cuddles said.

"Good," Danny said.

Bud and Mike stood there together for a minute while Danny and Cuddles whispered in the shadows. "Is he ready?" Bud said.

"He's ready all right," Mike said, well pleased with the hidden meaning of what he said. He looked at Bud with hate that he took little trouble to hide.

Danny and Cuddles were coming back. Mike raised his eyebrow to Danny. Danny nodded curtly and came over and stood beside him, slipping his arm around his shoulder. Suddenly Danny was behind him, holding his arms while Cuddles and Bud punched him in the face.

At first Mike was too shocked to protect his face. Then he began to buck and writhe to get rid of Danny. He lashed back with his head at Danny's face until Danny tucked his head down close. All the while the other two kept beating at his head and shoulders although by then he was much harder to hit accurately. He horsed Danny over to the corner of the building and tried to beat him off against the sharp edge of the bricks. After one particularly brutal lunge in which he was sure he caught Danny's head between his back and the bricks, he was able to break loose. But he went stumbling off balance across the sidewalk into two screaming women. Cuddles ran after him all the way and smashed his fist into the back of his neck before he could straighten. That sent him flat on his face. He got up as far as his hands and knees. Danny was beside him with half of his face a bloody mass. Danny kicked at his ribs but it didn't stop him and he kept coming up. But Bud was behind him and kicked in between his legs.

That was all.

He lay there puking but nothing mattered. There was a lot of running. There were police whistles. But nothing mattered. He had a vague idea that this would be useful in explaining why he hadn't got back to work that afternoon, but not even that mattered.

KENNETH BURKE:

A 'Dramatistic' View of 'Imitation'

[This is an excerpt from a much longer essay concerned with the "carving out" of a Poetics, and taking Aristotle's treatise as its point of departure. Its stress upon "Dramatism," as contrasted with "scientism," is in no way meant to imply a derogation of science as such. The "Dramatistic" perspective approaches the poem in terms of *action,* whereas "scientism" approaches the poem in terms of *knowledge.* And the author would contend that, though poems, and even works of sheer persuasion, may have value as information, or "news," the direct approach to their nature as forms is not through such a route.

Any scientific work can be studied purely for its persuasiveness or beauty *(i.e.,* as rhetoric or poetic); any rhetorical work can be studied purely for its beauty or truth *(i.e.,* as pure poetry or as scientific information); and any poem can be studied either as a piece of rhetorical exhortation or as a means of purveying information (news, knowledge, science). But *essentially, culminatively,* it is only *scientific* works that should be approached *directly* in terms of truth, knowledge, perception, and the like. (Unless we have overlooked it, the word "truth" does not appear in the *Poetics.* It does, however, appear in many scientistically tinged translations.)

In the present pages, we consider Aristotle's key term, *mimesis,* from this point of view, as we try to show how the *culminative* emphasis in his notion of the "entelechy" was obscured by a notion of representation that is nearer to the stress upon the average or "statistical" as a test of the representative. Othello, for instance, would be a "culminative" or "entelechial" depiction of a jealous husband. He is not the statistical average (though some people seem to think they have reclaimed him for science by discovering that there actually was one notorious case of a Moor who strangled his wife in Shakespeare's time).]

"Dramatistically," we would admonish that "imitation" and "representation" are not wholly adequate translations of *mimesis.* These words are slightly too "scientist" in their connotations. There is no

reason to replace them, particularly since the usage has been established by so many centuries of tradition — and there are no handier equivalents anyhow. We need merely to point out the respects in which, unless we deliberately make allowance for differences between the original word and its translations, the translations can mislead.

First, when you are told that drama is "the imitation of an action" (sometimes also phrased as "imitation of life" or "imitation of nature") you might get around the overly photographic or "documentary" suggestions in such expressions by recalling that Aristotle also lists flute-playing and lyre-playing as "imitations." The overly scientist emphasis may also arise in this way: Where the original says merely *mimesis,* translators often add words, making the statement read "imitations (or representations) of life (or of nature)."

Greek tragedy being much nearer to grand opera than to the style of modern naturalism, its "imitations" included many ritualistic elements (as with the masks of the actors and the traditional dance movements of the chorus) that could only be interpreted as *interferences* with imitation, if the term had merely some such meaning as the faithful depicting of the "lifelike."

For a beginning, let us consider a scattering of terms that might help us loosen up our notion of "imitation." To an extent, we might substitute: "the *miming* of an action." (Recall where Chaplin, for instance, "imitates" a dancer by taking two forks, sticking a roll on the end of each, and acting "life-like" *in terms of this* greatly disparate medium.) Or: "the ritual figuring of an action" (since Greek tragedy was built about "quantitative" parts that, whatever their origin in nature, were as ceremonious as the processional and recessional of the Episcopalian service). Or: "the stylizing of an action." (The characters in Greek tragedy stood for certain civic functions somewhat as with the heroic posturing of an equestrian statue in a public park.) Or: "the symbolizing of an action." (Hence, we would hold that our term, "symbolic action," aids greatly in the reclaiming of lost connotations here.)

"Nature" or "life" is the world of *history.* And history in Aristotle's scheme is the realm of *particulars,* whereas he tells us that "imitations" are concerned with *universals.* What does he mean by this distinction? (The distinction would allow us to add, among our scattered correctives, "the universalizing of an action.")

The difficulty seems to involve the fact that many critics who have directly or roundabout adopted Aristotle's stress upon "imitation" do

not at all share the particular "philosophy of the act" implicit in his use of the term. Such short-cutting makes for what we call the "scientist" fallacy, a materialist stress upon the scenic document, "truth to life" in an "informational" sense, whereas Aristotle rated Spectacle (that is, scene) as the lowest among the six parts of Tragedy. An obscuring of the distinction (Coleridge's) between "imitation" and "copy" results, we believe, from the use of Aristotle's term without reference to the theory of the "entelechy" that was an integral part of it.

The world of modern technology is so thoroughly built in accordance with concepts of place and motion developed from Galileo and similar experimental geniuses, that if we approach the whole subject of motivation from this point of view, not only shall we not believe in the notion of the "entelechy," we shall have trouble in understanding it, and even more trouble in understanding how anybody ever could have believed in it.

In Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry,* there is a passage admirably designed to show how the notion of the "entelechy" gradually ceased to be applied in the Western critics' use of the term, "imitation." (And since the "entelechy" is essentially Dramatistic, a term for action, in contrast with the great Renaissance inquiries into *motion,* it would be fitting to recall that Sidney was a contemporary of Galileo's, though Galileo survived him by more than half a century.) Sidney is discussing the "Heroical" (that is, Epic poetry):

> But if anything be already said in the defense of sweet Poetry, all concurreth to the maintaining the Heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best, and most accomplished kind of Poetry. For as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty images of the Worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy [let us at this point interrupt to recall the almost psychotic emphasis upon the *digne* and *indigne* in Corneille's tragedies, the test of worthiness being, of course, such as fits the ideals of the French court, or more specifically, submission to the French monarch, whose rule was by Corneille identified with both the will of God and the love of country] and informs with counsel how to be worthy. Only let *Aeneas* be worn in the tablet of your memory, how he governeth himself in the ruin of his Country, in the preserving his old Father, and carrying away his religious ceremonies: in obeying the God's commandment to leave *Dido,* though not only all passionate kindness, but even the humane consideration of virtuous gratefulness, would have craved other of him. How in storms, how in sports, how in war, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besieged, how besieging, how to strangers, how to allies, how to enemies, how to his own: lastly, how in his inward self, and how in his outward government . . .

Now, in the "entelechy" is the idea that a given kind of being fully "actualizes" itself by living up to the potentialities natural to its kind. (Man is not wholly complete as man, for instance, unless he has completely attained the rational maturity possible to man as a species. A tree's actualization requires not only not rationality, but not even locomotion for its completeness of being, though of course its actualization requires the kinds of motion needed for its growth.) We can see the strong vestiges of "entelechial" thinking in Sidney's statement; for he would have us note how Aeneas imitates kinds of perfection (finishedness, completeness, in the sense of "the compleat angler"). According to this interpretation, by "how in storms" Sidney means that Virgil shows Aeneas *perfectly storm-tossed;* "how a fugitive" would mean, the sum-total of fugitive, the very essence of the fugitive, the embodiment of the exact traits, in the exact proportions, that would best imitate the fugitive's role.

No, we would modify our account here somewhat. Pure entelechial imitation would obviously have a less moralistically didactic slant than we find in Sidney's formula. Already, the entelechy is on the way out. Insofar as foul-mouthed Thersites, in the *Iliad,* is the "perfect" exemplar of what Hegel calls "Thersitism," he too would be an entelechial imitation. A playwright entelechially motivated might thus look not just for perfect heroes; he would also seek for the exact situation, the exact expressions, the exact relationships, the exact thoughts and choices, that would constitute the perfect coward, the perfect hypocrite, the perfect traitor, and so on.

We do not say that the actual concept of the entelechy is needed for literary criticism. We are saying that the full significance of "imitation" has been lost to us — and by thinking of the "entelechial principle" we can better discount the scientist meanings that have engrafted themselves upon the strongly Dramatistic term. Philip Wheelwright's thoughtful translation of selections from Aristotle variously renders the term as: "actuality," "fulfilment," "state of perfect fulfilment," "realization," "full actual character." W. R. Ross, for the *Metaphysics,* uses "complete reality." In his introduction to an edition of Leibnitz's *Monadology,* Robert Latta defines entelechy as "the principle of a thing in the sense of its implicit perfect realization." And in another passage he says: "*Entelecheia* in Aristotle is the *state* of perfection or realization in which *energeia* [actualization] as a process, ends." Windelband gives his definition a somewhat idealistic twist: "self-realization of the essence in the phenomena." *Encyclopaedia Britan-*

nica, Eleventh Edition: "The perfection of the form of a thing is its entelechy, in virtue of which it attains its fullest realization of function." Zeller points to the etymology: "Entelecheia means that which has its perfection, its end *(telos)* in itself."

In the *De Anima,* Aristotle calls the soul an entelechy. In the *Metaphysics* the term is applied to God, the "first essence," which "has no matter because it is complete reality."

Leibnitz borrowed the word to describe his monads, each of whom is said to be an entelechy. The word here means *tendency* of a thing to unfold its nature. But the application is atomistic, and incipiently scientist (since each monad is said to be a unit of innate *perception,* a notion that fits well with the epistemological turn from act to cognition as generating principle of the terminology).

However, Leibnitz's notion of his sensitive monads, each partially reflecting the nature of the entire universe, is useful for our purposes. He says: "The world is entirely in each of its parts, but more distinctly in some than in others." This may or may not be true of the particles that compose the material universe, but it is certainly true of the various terms that cluster together in a single universe of discourse. Hence our belief that *entelecheia* is present, though not "distinctly," in Aristotle's use of *mimesis* with regard to the symbolic action of poetry.

We might put it thus: Given the full range of human characters and situations, there would not merely be the entelechial imitating of man's noblest potentialities *qua* man; there would also be the actualizing of human types within the species. For though man, in his perfection, would be essentially rational, according to the Aristotelian scheme, there will also be characteristic ways of departing from this rationality. And the entelechial principle would prevail insofar as you "imitate" any such departure, or imitate different situations. Thus the ruler's typical ways of being to perfection "himself" as ruler would differ from those in which the poet might "be himself," etc.

We deliberately use here the expression "be oneself" to give a glimpse of entelechial thinking behind the formula, though the notion of "kind" has been individualized. One is exhorted to be a kind all by oneself, in accordance with idealistic emphases that transform the realistic concern with role or act into a cult of "pure" personality.

This is not the place to consider at length the many ways in which the *entelechial* principle was later lost in the idea of "imitation," or warped into a different shape by the increasingly "scientist" connota-

tions that obscured the original implications of the term. But a few of the main ones are obvious, since they can be seen in Sidney's statement.

The didactic emphasis (the Renaissance stress upon "instruction" as an important element of poetry) is the first great deviation. The how's of Sidney's statement were given a moralistically pragmatic slant, with the hierarchal motive in art conceived too narrowly. Thus when discussing "the utility of tragedy" *(Reflections on the Poetic Art,* Section XLV) Fontenelle says that he does not understand Aristotle's formula for "the purgation of the passions by means of the passions"; then he continues:

> It seems to me that the greatest utility of the theatre is to render virtue amiable to men, to accustom them to interest themselves in virtue, to touch their hearts, to put before them great examples of resoluteness and courage in their misfortunes, and by that means to fortify and elevate their sentiments. From that it follows that not only must characters be virtuous but also that they must be virtuous in the proud and elevated manner of Corneille, so that they will strengthen the heart and give lessons in courage.

There are endless variants on this notion, of tragedy as a set of models for noble action (though the connotations of nobility gradually shift from the gestures of the Court to the bourgeois virtues of sentiment, a shift discernible in the Fontenelle quotation).

By the same token, comedy is praised for producing the same effect by opposite means, since it uses ridicule to deter men from temptations that would threaten the social order. One sample of this endlessly varied theme should be enough for our purposes. (René Rapin, *The Poetics of Aristotle,* section XXV):

> Comedy is an image of common life; its end is to show on the stage the faults of particulars, in order to amend the faults of the public, and to correct the people through a fear of being rendered ridiculous. So that which is most proper to excite laughter is that which is most essential to comedy.*

Another mode of departure was, of course, through the use of stock characters and stock situations, a burlesque of "universality" got through sheer lack of invention. Such procedure did not need to be asked for; low canons of rhetoric would spontaneously lead mercenary playwrights into this path, since one must appeal through

* Both of these citations are from *Dramatic Essays of the Neoclassic Age,* edited by Henry Hitch Adams and Baxter Hathaway.

an audience's sense of the "natural," and a convention can become "natural" in this sense (as with superficial "typing," the "typical" Irishman, "typical" Jew, "typical" Englishman, etc.). Such canons of "naturalness" now help protect a great deal of Hollywooden art against the encroachments of serious foreign films. Largely, of course, such protection is contrived by an extra-artistic device: control over the system of distribution. But it can also rely on a low form of aesthetic conservatism (there are admirable kinds of such) in the movie audiences.

Our movie-goers are supposed to be in search of "entertainment." But actually, they will pay good money *to be bored*. We do not mean that they are cheated, in being led to expect more than they get. We mean that they *positively demand boredom*. For in such boredom there is solace, there is the implied assurance that all is as was. It is the modern equivalent, in "movie temples" (when witnessing a murder mystery, for instance) to the almost irresistibly sleep-producing intonations of a hell-fire sermon in the earlier dispensation.

Be that as it may, once "typicality" (in the sense of stock characters and stock plots) has come to be deemed "natural," a scientist test can raise good aesthetic questions. (Above all, for instance, it questions the habit of assigning to each nationality a single role, like the animals in Aesop's Fables.) There is thus a positive reason for becoming insensitive to the entelechial aspect of imitation: insofar as universality has thus degenerated into the use of conventional signs for recalling conventional attitudes, art can reinvigorate itself only "scientistically," by fresh "observation," by checking its utterances against the many *particulars* of life.

But while realism, in this "naturalistic" sense, is necessary, the very zeal of critics in expounding it can take us too far from a concern with the range of major motives that figure in aesthetic appeal. And if you read a novel, say, about nondescript, Bohemian, cosmopolite, and perverted characters roaming through the bars and brothels of pre-war or post-war or between-wars Europe, we would propose that you'd come nearer to explaining its nature if you adapted Sidney's formula than if you heralded it as a purely "naturalistic" emancipation from "moralistic" and "didactic" bias. That is, you should say: The author is showing us *how to be the perfect, "compleat,"* nondescript, Bohemian, cosmopolite, perverted wanderer in the bars and brothels, etc. In this sense, his imitations would have the kind of *fulfilment* that we would associate with the entelechial aspect

of imitation, in contrast with a purely naturalistic kind *(reportage)*.

Here would be the bond between "imitation" and the "universal." After the German romantic philosophers, perhaps the notion is often contained in the term "idealization." (It is a useful term for the purpose, if you remember its range: at one end, the questionably eulogistic attributing of excellencies to someone or something; at the other, the attaining of the purposive simplicity we get in such ironic expressions as "the ideal liar," "the ideal thief.")

One imitates entelechially, thereby attaining a universal, insofar as the individual is shown living up to the potentialities of its genus. There is such entelechial thought in Shakespeare's phrase, "every inch a king." (One also glimpses the hierarchal motive in the notion of the entelechy.)

And so, in sum, were the poem (for instance) to imitate a sailor universally, entelechially, it would have him represent to the full the potentialities of sailor as such: speaking nautical terms (even perhaps to the extent of applying nautical analogies to non-nautical matters), scrupulous in the performing of his duties at sea (yet revealing exactly the most relevant temptations to the dereliction of such duties), looking perhaps with a carnival eye upon his times in port, etc. He would not be merely "typed," though typing would be the corresponding corruption of such a norm. And insofar as the feeling for this norm began to weaken, the same insight might be preserved somewhat in canons of "instruction" (which would involve the corresponding antithesis, canons of "amusement"). "Instruction" could then become conceived in hierarchal terms overly narrow: hence would result a kind of moral pragmatism, instructions how to be the ideal sailor for the greater glory of such-and-such an empire-builder. And whether we end with merely the stock character of a sailor, or with a falsely heroicized figure, "naturalism" would be our corrective. However, though its "scientist" emphasis might help refresh art, it would in turn lead to a faulty analysis of poetic excellence. Critics would suggest that the writer appealed by purely naturalistic imitation of particular sailors. At this point, we would attempt to recover the entelechial ingredient in imitation. Or at the very least, even if you would ban the entelechy as a bit of outmoded nonsense, we would reaffirm our contention that you must at least take it into account when asking what *Aristotle* meant by *mimesis* (in contrast with what the term can seem to mean, when translated as "imitation" or "representation," and thus used after several centuries during

which "nature" came progressively to be equated with the processes of technology).

And when thus summing up, we might note how the "fourfold method" of mediaeval criticism in its way also departed somewhat from the entelechy even while partially preserving its genius. In effect, it broke the entelechy-universal into four pieces, each of which thereafter could be featured, or even proclaimed exclusively. From the stressing of the literal could come the "documentary" school ("naturalism," the "scientist" bias). From the stressing of the moralistic or "tropological" could come "instruction" (hence, tragedy as a book of etiquette for the heroics of empire; comedy as a book of etiquette in reverse, the use of ridicule to deter deviations). From the stressing of the "allegorical" would come the featuring of temporal or local allusiveness as the be-all and end-all of poetry. (One can see how both "allusiveness" and "instruction" could be telescoped eventually into aspects of the "documentary.") And from the "anagogic" could come "amusement." (Once the concerns with grace, power, felicity, perfection, and the like have been secularized for use as terms to describe purely *aesthetic* ultimates — in accord with the translating of the religious passion into the romantic passion — then the "radiance" of an aesthetic object can be said to reside in its sheer delight as a pleasurable sensuous thing existing here and now, obviously another emphasis that has been telescoped into the scientist-literal.) In our *Rhetoric,* we have sought to show how such "grace" (of the *ars gratia artis* sort) is emblematic of a *social* anagoge, as the objects of "natural" experience (in the empiricist sense) can secretly represent social judgments related to the real but somewhat confused hierarchy of social classes. "Amusement" thus now covers the use of art to ends implicitly "propagandistic." For the "naturalness" of such art derives from its conformity with conventions that would uphold the status quo (even though, inexorably, by the ironies of history, they are making for exactly the contrary outcome: general inaccuracy, when coached and perfected with systematic efficiency, *must* become a Pandora's box that opens itself).

The present cult of the "myth" can also be fitted into these thoughts on entelechy. For the "mythic" now is usually proposed in opposition to overly scientific, naturalistic, "documentary" or materialistic criteria in art. In part, the controversy is rooted in extra-aesthetic considerations. The myth can serve as "idealization" in the merely eulogistic sense; or, when not downright eulogistic, it can at

least be *deflective,* as were some immediately present and materialistically explainable politico-economic conflict to be viewed exclusively in the "higher" terms of some mythic or prehistoric struggle, fall, or curse. In this respect, the market for a myth may be explained by critics on purely aesthetic grounds, whereas the supposed "universality" of the supposedly "aesthetic" can be a temporary way of using art to avoid the accurate contemplation of non-aesthetic elements.

But there is one good argument in behalf of myth, as we realize when we consider, for instance, the various ways in which the three great Greek tragic playwrights used myth. If you relate characters to one another after the analogy of some myth, you automatically acquire an underlying simplicity of structure that almost requires you to make the various roles "universal." You can get the point by thinking, in contrast, of some complicated modern novel or drama of intrigue (a feeble variant of the "scientist psychosis"), in which you are dragged through a "mysterious" muddle of false leads and loose ends, to end on some hastily contrived gadget of explanation (or rather, an anti-climax disguised as an explanation). Contrast such an unprincipled contraption with the stark lines of a Greek tragedy, which possesses in its way the same simplicity as one finds in Greek architecture and Greek statuary of the classic period. Even much of the best Elizabethan tragedy suffers by comparison. The outraged lover, the unjust king, the avenging son, the suppliant fugitive, the blind seer, the tortured god — the myths "naturally" led the playwright to cast his perception of particulars into such universal molds, giving his "imitations" the *summarizing* quality that adds up to the notion of the "entelechy."

Thus, even though Sartre uses myth perversely, he does contrive to exploit it for its formal, simplifying function. And a play of intrigue can be improved formally by even an artificial imposing of mythic lines upon it. In *The American Scholar,* Winter 1950-51, Malcolm Cowley touches upon this point somewhat when, discussing the possible effect of the "New Criticism" on creative writers, he says:

> It may terrify them; it may stop them from writing at all, or, if they do write, it may cause them to write according to one of the formulas advanced by whichever New Critic is teaching that year at Princeton or wherever it may be — according to a number of formulas, like a beautiful one followed by Frederick Buechner in his first novel, *A Long Day's Dying.* The formula is simply to find a classical myth, tell the myth in the shape of a lecture delivered

> to Princeton boys, and then restate the myth in contemporary terms, always stepping down the intensity of the myth into mild contemporary equivalents.

The observation suggests that the mythic frame might even become a mechanical subterfuge, a device of play-doctoring. But we are suggesting that a formal virtue, however perverted, rests at the roots of such a possible vice.

As we tried to show elsewhere, in our analysis of *Othello,* the concept of "tensions" can also be applied, as a way of re-introducing an equivalent of the entelechy in imitation. For if there is a certain tension in human relations, the artist may exploit it dramatically by analyzing it into parts, "breaking it down" into a set of interrelated roles (a device that permits the tension to be "processed"; for whereas in human relations it just *is,* the breaking of it into parts permits these parts to act upon one another, in a series of operations that, when followed in exactly the order they have in their particular whole, lead to a "catharsis"). Roles chosen by such a test are likely to be "entelechial" imitations, since they will imitate not particular individuals, but basic human situations and strategies, translated into equivalent terms of personality.

When the "tensions" are too local (as with the tensions of temporary factional disputes), often a sheerly rhetorical motive can be misinterpreted "scientistically." Thus, when looking for evidence that a certain social situation prevails, sociological critics will sometimes cite the prevalence of such a topic in popular literature of the times. But often a rhetorical discount is necessary. For instance, a speaker held that, in his opinion, life in the United States was much more "matriarchal" than "patriarchal." And as proof, he cited the fact that so many motion pictures play up the type of the put-upon husband and father, whose frustrations about the house are humorously amplified, while he mumbles to himself ineffectually, being treated patronizingly by wife, children, servants, tradesmen, and even the family dog, but masochistically and without fail paying the bills with which all the other members of the family blithely saddle him. Maybe yes, maybe no. But before taking this stock character at face value, as evidence of a correspondingly prevalent social type, one should certainly consider the possibility that the role is the sentimentalizing of a situation quite different.

Imagine, for instance, a husband who is unquestionably the head of the family. Each day he goes off to work as to a "mystery," so

far as his family at home is concerned. They know only what he chooses to tell them. Everything necessarily centers about him, since he is the wage-earner. Things must be so arranged that he catches exactly the right train, gets exactly the right food at exactly the right time, sleeps for exactly the right interval . . . and insofar as such requirements are not met, he must grumble mightily for his rights. Each day he goes into a world of "adventure," his absence being in essence as unaccountable as the daily disappearance of Cupid was to Psyche. Under such conditions, might not the wife feel herself inferior? Then if, of an afternoon, she goes to a movie temple for her meditations and devotions, would there not be "medicine" for her in the picture of a husband thus lovingly put upon, a lovable old bear essentially as timid as the lion in the *Wizard of Oz?* And so on. In brief, might the part be featured in this popular art precisely because it *did not* directly reflect the motives in the social situation itself, but was an "idealization" of them? There would, of course, be certain superficial signs about, to give the character plausibility. But the main function of the character would derive not from a corresponding "documentary" reality, but rather from the ingratiating triviality of the distortion.

In the *Poetics* there are several passing references to the appeal of "wonder" in the imitations of tragedy, and we shall revert to the theme when we come to that term. Meanwhile, we should note this "complicating factor": Once the resources of imitation have been systematically exploited by a priesthood, imitations can be endowed with a magical power not present in the things imitated. Hofmannsthal tells of a tribe that fears neither man nor tiger, but the tribesmen are paralyzed with terror when a priest dances before them wearing a tiger pelt. And we know of a child who awoke in the night, shrieking, from the dream of a snake. Yet the next day he placidly bathed in a pool while a water snake lay on a branch nearby. His mother asked him: "Why aren't you worried about this snake, when you were so afraid of the snake you dreamed about last night?" And he answered: "This one is real." There is a magic in imitations, that probably draws in part upon the magic of dreams (which a priesthood can interweave with the magic of class). Such considerations lead us to the "hierarchal" motives that lurk in the entelechy (touching upon it as "enigmatic," containing the mystery and magic, the "wonder," of class relationships).

From our point of view, however, the *Poetics,* beneath its essayistic facade, would in this regard be itself a kind of "dramatic analysis,"

with the terms of a single tension being so broken apart that they can curatively or cathartically operate upon one another like characters in a play. Thus the wonder in entelechial imitation is not explicitly said to be a part of it, but is broken off, treated as an independent term, existing in its own right, its secret relation to its partner-term being revealed not by explicit tracing of the relationship between them, but by the fact that they appear in the same context *(apparently* related only by "and": there is imitation *and* there is wonder).

But, just as previously our doubts about the "scientist" grounding of a character led us into rhetoric in the superficial sense, here we touch upon rhetoric in the profoundest sense. Or rather, we come upon the centre, where rhetoric and poetic coalesce, where the *intrinsic radiance* of an aesthetic object has social implications in its very essence. And as we have said before, we are unable to maintain our vision steadily, where this moment is concerned. Here is the point where the divinity of the ultimate ground merges deceptively with the pseudo-divinity of class relationships. We have claimed that "naturalism" but reproduces, more self-protectively (from the standpoint of "scientist" norms), the deceptions of "supernaturalism" (insofar as "supernaturalism" can be a disguise for temporal interests in terms of the eternal, a shift that Hobbes would call "making men see double"). If we are right, then Aristotle's stress upon "nature" as the grounding for men's delight in imitation should secretly contain such a "drama" as we have here caught glimpses of.

Conversely, we can catch glimpses of an entelechial grammar behind the pathos of John, XIX, 30: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished"; *consummatum est; es ist vollbracht;* the Greek text has *Tetelestai,* a verb perfect passive in form, that contains the *telos* of "entelechy," to designate an "end," not just as a dying or desisting, but rather as a purpose, now at last fulfilled.

ARTHUR GREGOR:

A Girl Named Gypsy

When she
walks by
the sea
she is
the beats of
that melody so
perfectly a-
live is she

a gypsy
she is
called in
Hungary

Of
the wind and
to be
free-ly a-
live
mädchen un-
der the
lindentree it
is a sin, of
it she has
made a
mandolin

Now,
this painted
wood so
silently
a god is my
for me
ever love-
ly prince to
be says she

from moun-
tain to
mountain
yodel-ee
yodel-ee
this gypsy
her horse
left behind
in Hungary

high up in
the snow un-
folds her
fan, all is
that I am, a
rose in
her hair a
lily and a
rose behind
her veil she is
her own Lady of
Spain so perfect-
ly tyrolean

Almost The Entire Journey

Almost the entire journey
there was nothing
but fog at my window.
Had it not been for
the roads
that were all uneven,
for the rock
that ruined the axle,
for the depth,
the turbulent river that frightened
the horses,

for the height that caused
the coachman to stop and make a fire (it was
very cold)
— I could not have been
certain
if all this were actually a journey
or merely
another dream.

It was not until the last day
that the fog
lifted
and I could see through my window
the country still heavy with rain,
the road
red as a birth,
and ahead of us the wagon
drawn by oxen
and the two dogs that barked
as we passed
and followed us quite a way.

BOBB DAVIS:

Epithalamion

Innocents have gone
into the woods again
with bows and arrows
and blunt instruments.

Babes of the plighted
word building new fire
in ashes where the black
birds knew hunger

and the scarecrows
failing of their intent

both lost their way
and found their purpose,

they have sown
return journeys in grain
bright as dragon's teeth
in black furrows,

and the foundations
of their cities are
seed as delicate as
the flour of Pharos.

Thanatopsis

Death and Proust's grandma played that
scene from the Tower where the lady
refuses to lay her head upon the block.
He found her finally at a party when she

was old. I think she dropped a cup and
shattered by the violence everyone else
was suddenly transformed to audience.
Would she receive him? Would his false

face melt like a tragedy in painted wax,
drooping eyes, mouth like a scimitar?
She cut him dead. He was received in
many a house but he was nothing to her.

And so I say so live that when thy
Mozart draws to where you know it draws
you may have cheated death by being dead
with the solitary pride of Proust's grandma,

who died in an immaculate conception
properly at home and by her own choice
one of her Wednesdays when the megaphones
of lilies softly drowned her master's voice.

JIM WALTERS:

Procession in Silver

I

During sleep the ruffled clouds came drifting,
Moving in on waking dreams, so one could
See how white they were; and as each shifting
Movement changed the scene, one thought the sun should
See how glistening with light and heat
They were.

One could barely see for all the light.
One could only see that once, this time,
Words completed, clouds alone were bright;
Every living-dying thing in time;
Lost in shadow, bathed in soft
Oblivion.

Though it couldn't, yet if only sleep
Had lasted. Yet the clouds alone are endless;
They at last become so very deep
That even they must lose, in being endless,
All their meaning. Only thus maintained
They last.

Then, with every slipping finger-hold
On meaning, as the frozen fingers slipped
Away, the ruffled clouds escaped their mold,
Ran away into the wind, and dipped
Their eager fingers back into
Eternity.

II

One must seek in trembling whispers, holding
Bitten fingers fast around his grief,
Looking through the eye, which, all enfolding,
Yesterday was blinded by a leaf;
Hearing through the same excited ear
That yesterday could even hear a tear;

Seeking with the same sad, searching fear
That yesterday was tortured by a spider,
Seconds past had found its freedom here,
Now in terror sees the spider
Frozen to the sand, frozen to a
Cinder.

One can just incredulously ask
If these are still the clouds that heard the wind,
If red is really yellow or a mask
To which the monstrous, gloating symbol pinned
Its hopes to hide the fact of being
Artificial —

Perhaps not artificial, but the all!
The moon is only in the house tonight.
Tomorrow every tyranny must fall.
Or must one even make his blood unite
Around a burning orb, to taste it, feel it,
Mind it?

III

Little silver pains, little silver
Tokens of a self, dropping like
A solid frozen tear and beating silver,
Painful little beats each time they strike
Upon the ribs, themselves a beating beaten
Drum-head.

IV

Draw them all together with a tiny
Silver magnet. Draw at first with failing
Courage on the clouds, and upon the winey
Symbol, which appears to be the veiling
Of the all, and little silver tokens
Of a self.

Then even though the coldness lashes loose
A spreading tear, the little silver magnet
Burns the hand, betrays at last the ruse;
The slipping grasping hand can't hold the magnet
Burning deep a tawdry mark upon
The hand.

BERNICE SLOTE:

Georgia Night

Jauntily, wind picks at magnolia bones
Somewhere, in a hill's hollow, Georgia night.
The hunters have gone, leaving the dust and the black
Gourd's blacker fall. Now rind has withered from sight:

Only a pearled stalk there, waiting a sign
That one time one will return and, turning, look
In the white sun straight at the white white body of bones,
And lie with it for his soul's sake.

One like that,
Anyone coming at dawn, will marvel at birds
Sparkling out of the tangled bush.
After
The rope is rotten, so many sunlit words.

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV:

Fun-House Mirrors

Proud Rhoda peers unbelieving
At the blowsy Emma ballooning in
The fun-house mirror, giggles too
To see a seeming gaffe, a giraffe,

Of the so-called natural world gawk
In Alice-in-Wonderland defection
From her. Herself? Don't be silly,
She says, skirting the blurred hint

That eyes refract her and she climbs
Or fattens as we choose, becomes
Whore or maiden, fool or sophist,
Tongued black, mauve, or gold

(It is our prerogative, also,
To lesson clocks and telescope miles,
Deny life to the innocent, and make
A misdemeanor if we wish of joy).

Only a lover adds, subtracts to Plato's
Proportions, Rhoda, corrects the rouge,
And crowns you empress — oh, all at once! —
Of a scene in crystal, realer than the real.

The Thief and the Juryman

Eight-gendered Mr. Jones, the juryman,
Himself a paradigm of possibility
In twenty dimensions, a cosmos of singular
Predications (he strings wire for the feet
Of foxes, digs graves for abandoned dolls,
Sings hymns in the urinal, dreams of mares in heat,
And contradicts the moment's package of gin
With steaming cruelties of belted words),
Sits in bald judgment of Smith, the thief.
Their eyes join in the courtroom space across
Smith's alibis as planets bump and part.
Jones yawns; Smith sighs; the rubber clock ticks.
At last a gavel falls, tongues pause, and Jones'
Dream judges Smith's. The bored juror remembers
His wife and dinner, lopes homeward, and the thief,
Star-eyed, staggers to the cosmic jug.

Timed to Our Wheel

He rubbed death's metaphysic from his aching eyes
With a blue, gnawed hand (a worm had tunneled it)
And saw our village wheel: a woman shelling peas,
A drunken peasant perched above bleeding bullocks,
A girl burning in song the color of wheat,
A patriarch listening to a tree of sparrows.
Storms of white light struck our morning eyes
As we gathered for his truth, the climate of ghosts.
To our patchwork questions about soundless nights,
The worm's intrusion, and the breath of angels, he
Disposed no answering vision of judgment or
Corruption, shaking us. As blood pulsed through
His lungs once more and his lobes timed to our wheel,
He smiled from his stone door and snuffed the air. He said
"Where is my wife? I'd like some bread and cheese."

WALLACE FOWLIE:

Choderlos de Laclos

CHODERLOS DE LACLOS: *Dangerous Acquaintances* (translated by Richard Aldington). New Directions.

Even in the 18th century itself, when the book was widely read and discussed at the time of its publication in 1782, the novel of Choderlos de Laclos appeared scandalous. *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* had its place in Marie Antoinette's library, but the queen had taken care that the binding bore no title and no author. Jean Giraudoux, in his brilliant essay on Laclos, makes the exceptional claim that it is the one French novel which gives the impression of danger. The bad reputation which the book acquired in the year of its first appearance, 170 years ago, has not been altered.

Not very much is known about the author. Laclos was forty-one years old in 1782. He was a soldier by vocation, an artillery-officer. On losing his commission, he entered the world of politics where he served as secretary to the Duke of Orleans. He returned to the army ten years before his death, in 1803, when he was one of Napoleon's generals.

This military man who wrote only one novel, and made a masterpiece out of it, was unquestionably a moralist by nature. And yet the particular kind of moralist he was, is difficult to define. His subject matter is the study of evil. He depicts it with frankness and detail. But his book is neither erotic nor obscene. He demonstrates no particular sympathy for mankind, and no particular hope in it. One never feels he has any complacency with the evil motive and actions of his characters. It might be that he feels evil to be overrated and that he has set about to unmask it.

Like two other novels which preceded it in the 18th century, *Clarissa Harlowe* of Richardson and *La Nouvelle Héloise* of Rousseau, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* is written in the form of letters. In its plot and even in certain episodes it has unquestionably been influenced by these two novels. But it differs from them in conciseness and rapidity of style, and especially in its psychological analysis, which goes very far in its sophistication and even in its cruelty. Every well-educated Frenchman of the 18th century had been trained by the moralists of the 17th century, by *Les Maximes* of La Rochefoucauld and *Les Caractères* of La Bruyère, as well as by Racine's analysis of passion in his tragedies. This made it possible for the two outstanding novels of the 18th century in France, *Manon Lescaut* of Abbé Prévost and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* of Laclos, to have been written by men who were not novelists or writers by profession.

The character of the Marquise de Merteuil is a complicated affair. She personifies one extreme side in the perpetual war between the sexes. She is concerned quite directly and unashamedly with the satisfaction of elementary desires. Sade might well see in her the beginnings of what he would call the natural woman. She has known all the experiences of a Célimène, as Molière depicted his heroine in *Le Misanthrope,* but she goes much farther in her obsession with bold virtuosity. The poetic charm of Célimène has practically disappeared in

the Marquise de Merteuil. The "little house" where she receives her suitors retains a good deal of 18th-century gallantry, but it has also elements about it reminiscent of the deserted castle of Sade where crimes and debauchery are perpetrated. Mme. de Merteuil is an autodidact and a thinker. She is also something of a demiurge in that she distributes roles and causes actions and crimes to be carried out. Her letters to Valmont create an exceptional complicity between the two characters. She is stronger and bolder than the man, more intelligent and more implacable.

Valmont, her partner and rival in this philosophy of sexual pleasure which excludes sentiment and emotion, often fails to understand her completely. He is more devious and more patient than Mme. de Merteuil. They are equal, however, in the degree to which they have liberated their sensuality from all constraint. In the sensual satisfactions he seeks, he is doubtless more complicated than the Marquise, more given to tastes which will develop in the heroes of Sade and the Gothic tale. He too has something of the demiurge in him. At least he has many traits of the dandy and the dilettante who will develop during the next century and be exalted by Baudelaire. The Vicomte de Valmont, as the libertine of Laclos, treated the women he loved as victims. In his later incarnations as dandy, he disdained them even as instruments for his satisfaction. He constantly uses the image of warfare: *"Conquérir est mon destin."* His basic impulse is the most primitive of all, that of dominating and ruling. He seems little worried that his Female Partner is more brilliant and accomplished than he is.

Mme. de Tourvel, called *"la Présidente,"* is the opposite type of woman to the Marquise. She lives in devotion to man, and even sacrifices her own salvation to the happiness of Valmont. She and the ingénue of the story, Cécile de Volanges, are both tragic examples of the dangers of such "acquaintances." The naivetés of Cécile remind one of the heroines of Molière and Marivaux. She is ill prepared for the ruses of the Seducer. Mme. de Tourvel might well have been in the previous century a penitent of François de Sales. In the victimizing of the two types of woman, they reveal traits of the Racinian heroine. In the long series of temptations offered by Valmont to Cécile and *la Présidente,* one has the impression of watching a condemned society, a drama whose end is announced beyond all doubt at its very beginning. The Paris houses and the provincial châteaux are like places of exile where the inhabitants vegetate in their solitude and boredom. The action of what Baudelaire would call "satanism" is almost more visible in the two victimized women than in the convinced libertines. The book is a treatise on sensuality and, save in the character of Mme. de Tourvel, there is almost no study of love. Cécile has, perhaps, too many traits of the simpleton and the pure sensualist, to appear praiseworthy. Mme. de Tourvel is the only character belonging to the bourgeoisie (as Baudelaire pointed out in his notes) and she alone attains to something like nobility of character. She plays an important part in the military metaphor pervading the book, because she is the woman destined to be defeated. She defends herself, but without hope. Her boudoir is a battlefield, and *gloire* means sexual success. On one level, Valmont's seduction of *la Présidente* is certainly an attack on the conventional morality of the century. But it is much more than that, because the psychological in this novel is constantly assuming greater importance than the ethical. Behind the problem of social laws and tradition, there is a profounder study of male

strategy and male domination. It is the problem of *gloire* or of whatever word happens to be substituted for male conquest.

The form of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses,* completely composed of letters, permits the characters to carry on a constant introspection. It also permits them — and this is far more important — to construct their own personalities, to invent and falsify their actions. A dialogue carried on by letters is far more thoughtful and planned and significant than any ordinary spontaneous dialogue. The adroitness and implacable skill of Valmont's writing contrasts, for example, with the despair of some of Mme. de Tourvel's letters. The letters of this novel, by comparison with the letters of Rousseau's and Richardson's novels, are closer to action than to narrative. They are instruments to cause suffering or to act as defense. They are often masks put on to conceal some vice or to compromise their correspondent. No matter how precise or how curt the letter be, the inevitable use of the first person reveals its origin which is usually the tone of confession or confidence. Even the conventional formulas which abound in all letters of the 18th century have a lyric and hence revealing quality about them. The constant answering back and forth gives the entire work an antiphonal quality, both lyric and ceremonious, like the parts of a Greek ode. The total effect, particularly with the gruesome endings of the characters, is that of a tragedy. The two novels, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *Manon Lescaut,* are more basically tragic than the literal tragedies of the 18th century.

The language of the book represents an extraordinary degree of clarity and preciseness. The exaggerated traits of preciosity and bombast which the 17th century had allowed, have practically disappeared. There are almost no remainders of poetic ornamentation, of pietistic verbiage, of picturesqueness for its own sake. The speech is direct and the answer is direct. The words mean what they say and that alone. The restricted vocabulary reminds one of Racine's. The elegance of the style come from its sobriety.

The strong current of sentimentality in 18th-century writing is nowhere present in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses.* Before 1782 and after it, in the early romantic period, much of French and European literature was well watered with tears. Sentiment had fully demonstrated itself with immodesty. In *La Nouvelle Héloise* and in *Werther,* all the virtues had languished and wept. Laclos was contemporary with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Chénier, a curious moment indeed for the flourishing of his dry prosaic genius. His novel came 100 years after the tragedies of Racine, but in many ways, in the ruthlessness, cruelty, penetration of the psychological analysis, Racine is the ancestor of Laclos. In both Racine and Laclos there is a strong alliance of politeness with intransigency. The protagonists know what their desires are and their fate is, and they speak directly of these matters with their *"confidents."*

This is a compromising book for humanity, as Giraudoux points out. Libertinism, when it no longer concerns a single man, as with Don Juan, but when it is studied in man and woman joined, who are equal in intelligence and brilliance, becomes a subject of deep scandal and deep shame. It is quite possible that the sophistication of this *libertinage* is as extreme as can be found in any book of any nation. The pure scandal of the book might have turned it into a study merely of eroticism, but it is much more than that, largely because of the wit of its sophistication, of the almost terrifying equality of the sexes in their pursuit of sexual conquest, in the comparative silence of Laclos over the ancient legend of woman's resistance to man.

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